

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Press Freedom in Zambia: A study of The Post newspaper and professional practice in political context**

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**Press Freedom in Zambia: A study of *The Post* newspaper and professional practice  
in political context**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD**

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## Abstract

This study investigates press freedom in the political context of Zambia by looking at *The Post*, a daily tabloid that operates in the country. It involves in-depth interviews with tabloid journalists working or having worked with the tabloid mainly in the area of reporting politics. It involves a literature review in the broader subject area and notes that, even though press freedom is the life blood of any democratic society which needs to be enhanced, there are other complexities that hinder its realisation, including ownership interests, tabloid journalists' predilections, advertisers' influence, political authorities' expectations, and readers' social and economic positions. In addition, despite the general public's expectations and the press's ardent quest for press freedom, the conception and understanding of press freedom in democracy is far from straight forward.

The research found that *The Post* was incapable of contributing effectively to the maturity of democracy. Its level of credibility as a tabloid was compromised by joining ranks with ruling politicians. Its traditional watchdog role of exposing political and social elites to public accountability was also suppressed due to political partnership. In addition, citizens needed to consider seriously online journalism as it provided information at the expense of *The Post* which was no longer vocal in these domains. Government too needed to provide favorable mechanisms to enhance online publishing as it was beneficial to the promotion and protection of democracy. Furthermore, the Press Association of Zambia and the Media Institute of Southern Africa needed to be more critical of government operations towards the press and needed to intensify their role in providing checks and balance on journalists to uphold their professional values.

Overall thesis contribution to knowledge derives from its critical examination of this under examined area of the role of tabloid journalism in emerging democracies. It adds detailed knowledge on the professional practice of tabloid journalism in Zambia as an exemplar of the political role of tabloid media in a developing democracy.

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## Introduction

I decided to embark on this research having worked as a tabloid journalist and having been involved with *The Post* as a reader and as a contributor. My desire to carry out this research was motivated by my strong belief in press freedom including my love for tabloids in emerging democracies. I decided to focus on the tabloid that was based in Zambia because of having lived, studied, and worked in the field of tabloid journalism. I looked at the tabloid from 1991 (Mungonge, 2007) when it was formed to 2013 when this research was finally completed.

The media business is unique because it deals in the information field which is provided to the general public (Croteau & Hoynes, 2005). Even though many Western scholars note that the media business have the potential to set the agenda and change public opinion (Keane, 1991; Aspinall, 1973), in many African countries, the media often survive at the mercy of government authorities. This dependency is due to the history of dictatorship and one-party form of government which has continued to hang over and hinder press freedom (Makungu, 2004; Kasoma, 1995; Ochilo, 1993).

However, still many media businesses have their own philosophy and their own perception of their role in cultural and social affairs. Despite the many theories highlighting the key role of the press in democracy, there are many other contentious issues that continue to overshadow media businesses and journalism practice in general. For example, the public sphere theory often stands in opposition to the market model theory of the media (Banda, 2007). The public sphere theory prioritizes the process of rational communication enhanced by democratic models of mass media, whereas the market model theory centralises the push and drive of commercial imperatives in shaping content and models of delivery; issues that were central to this investigation.

The study of *The Post* was explored in political context within the paradigm of intellectual scholarly and professional debates about press freedom. The tabloid provided a good case



to explore the aforementioned tensions within an emerging democracy. In fact, democracy depends on an informed electorate, in which the press play a critical role. One function of the press in a democracy is that of providing a platform where “discussion and differences in political debate can be aired” (Tunney, 2007: 3). However, in Zambia, the press were legally vulnerable in their attempt to move the country closer to liberal democratic states than to what had become the classic model of contemporary African dictatorship (Ochilo, 1993). Journalists working for private or government owned press were often harassed and intimidated by ruling authorities (Mathurine, 2004).

During my study (2010-2013), the press landscape was characterized by archaic and retrogressive laws which authorities used to suppress opposing views and which hanged ominously over journalists (Banda, 2007). Specifically, the practice of tabloid journalism was characterised by journalists’ fear because of the possibility that authorities could abuse their powerful positions and behave unreasonably. This apprehension was aggravated by instances of extreme reactions toward journalists by authorities which exacerbated their rather fragile relationship (African Media Barometer, 2009).

At times, threats that were aimed at the press were intended to lead to uncritical journalistic coverage of politicians and political statements (Moore, 1991). Tabloid journalists were more vulnerable because of their sensational approach to news coverage. In other words, their tendency to provoke conversation on controversial issues rendered them more vulnerable (Allan, 2004:104). The political authorities’ intolerance of critical citizens (which is often very common in many African countries) made many journalists vulnerable to arrests, imprisonment and even assassinations (Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1995; Ochilo, 1993).

The period from 1991 to 2011 was characterised by numerous laws that affected the press and journalists who consequently expressed themselves at their own peril. Linked to this, was the reality that the management of public funds was shrouded in secrecy (Banda, 2007). Even though press freedom was guaranteed by law, there were other laws that restricted the freedom in the interest of public order among other broader stipulations

(African Media Barometer, 2009). In other words, the restriction clauses over-rode the guaranteed press freedom (Chanda, 1998) and were so broad that virtually any decision to clamp down on journalistic expression could be justified to render it meaningless (Louw, 2004).

Bearing these debates in mind, Chapter One presents the broader context of the research and explores scholarly literature on the press and within tabloid journalism. Chapter Two introduces the political context of *The Post* and discusses its formation and development including the impact of a nascent democracy. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology including ethical considerations. Chapter Four, just before the interview findings in Chapter Five and Six, helps to shed light on similar issues explored with tabloid journalists themselves and is a contextual transition. It provides examples of the ‘muckraker’ form of journalism as exhibited by the tabloid in order to demonstrate its role in the public sphere and in an emerging democracy.

Chapter Five presents the research findings on *The Post* and its political positioning. It discusses the main roles of tabloid journalists as defined by themselves. It looks at the legal and political pressures in the environment in which they operate and how such pressures frustrate and liberate their work. Discussed also is the notion of press regulation and the ways in which regulation works well within journalism practice in relation to press freedom and to growth and maturity of democracy. Chapter Six presents the research findings on *The Post* and its professional dynamics. It discusses the editorial challenges of the tabloid journalists. It looks at the news items they consider best practice in tabloid journalism. It explores their aspiration for popular journalism in particular and to a modest degree, print journalism in general within an emerging democracy. Chapter Seven outlines the research overview and offers conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

All Chapters are framed by the notion of press freedom as an ideal and by factors that limit journalists’ roles within an emerging democracy. Explored also are arguments and scholarly debate on tabloid journalism and the perceptions of tabloid journalists as reporters in the

field of popular journalism. It is crucially important to understand journalistic practice to consider how they regard their functional roles in an archetypical infotainment genre and their professional identity. In all the discussions, two issues underpin this thesis's central argument and conclusion and are integrally connected; press freedom as an ideal and tabloid journalists' professional practices and limitations within an emerging democracy.

## Chapter I

### Background and literature review

Over the last two decades, Africa has witnessed a significant media expansion especially in the sub-Sahara (Banda, 2010). Journalism practice and media outlets are growing and many citizens are gaining access to wider varieties of media as sources (Karikari, 2004). Generally, in Africa, the practice of tabloid journalism tends to exist in an environment with a history of colonialism, dictatorship, authoritarianism, and a one-party system of government which usually impacts negatively on press freedom (Kasoma, 1995). Even though there is some form of limited press freedom in some countries like Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, it is important, however, to understand the kind of freedom in these countries is not in any way near to what is known to exist in countries such as the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Denmark (Ochilo, 1993:23).

In many African countries, press freedom is often suppressed and journalists regularly face harassment and violence (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). In Zambia for example, journalists are regularly attacked for criticising the government while others are censored and intimidated into conformity (Chama, 2012). It is within this context that I explored the question of press freedom and factors that limit journalists' role in their practice within the context of an emerging democracy through *The Post*, a daily tabloid. Therefore, this Chapter presents a literature review that argues that press freedom is linked to the practice of journalism and highlights the challenges faced by journalists. It first presents an introduction to the broader subject area then discusses literature addressing the theoretical concepts of the press, independent press, press freedom, tabloid press, the online press, press regulations, and the practice of the press. The reason I engaged with these areas was to understand broader issues that were associated with *The Post*. This Chapter concludes by presenting research parameters including: problem setting, study justifications, aims, questions, and contributions to broader knowledge.

## 1.0. Introduction

I am a journalist myself and shall appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no idea other than that of upholding the truth (*American Newspaper Association Foundation*, 2005:14).

The introductory statement above quoted from Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), although discussing journalistic responsibility to uphold the truth, also carries sufficient guidance on the expectation placed upon the free press. In fact, the plethora of research over the past sixty-years since this statement was made confirms the value of the personal truth in the journalism profession and in pursuance of press freedom (Lichtenberg, 1990). But despite truth being dependent on press freedom, there are many other theoretical and practical issues that constrain its realisation within professional practices and in democratic politics (Makungu, 2004).

For example, in many African countries, the press often criticise government at their own risk (Kasoma, 1995). In Eritrea and Zimbabwe, the government regularly arrests and detains journalists without trial or charge (Karikari, 2004). In Cameroun, attacks on journalists have worsened and it is ranked one of the regular jailors of journalists in the continent (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). In the Ivory Coast, journalists are often sued and imprisoned for exposing government hypocrisy (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000).

Therefore, there are many more questions than answers about the issue of truth seeking as a responsibility placed upon the press in political affairs (Kasoma, 1996). For example, there are questions about how far press and particularly tabloids can go in truth-seeking and what constitutes the very nature of press freedom (Ongowo, 2011). This is because tabloids have distinctive characteristics of prioritising sales and advertising revenues. This tendency has the potential to compromise truth seeking at the expense of financial profit (Wasserman, 2008). In my literature review, there are further critical questions exploring whether tabloids

are capable of enhancing democracy.<sup>1</sup> During fieldwork, these issues became evident in my discussions with tabloid journalists as explained in Chapters Five and Six.

Since my study was on the tabloid within an emerging African democracy and in the context of debates about press freedom, it was important to understand the practice of tabloid journalism as an archetypical infotainment genre (Ongowo, 2011). For example, *The Post* tended to sensationalized news and displayed a 'muckraker' form of journalism, which was a new phenomenon in Africa.<sup>2</sup> In South Africa similarly, the *Daily Sun* was the largest circulation tabloid due to its brazen sexual content and aggressive investigative journalism which generated a lot of controversy (Wasserman, 2010). In West Africa, Ghana's *Chronicle* used language which could be considered offensive and racist in some sections of African society including calling the country's former President Jerry John Rawlings a 'coloured bastard' (de Beer & Merrill, 2009). It was clear that the tabloids within the emerging democracies were challenging the notion of press freedom and cultural values (Chama, 2012).

In East Africa, Kenya's *Weekly Citizen* pushed the ethical limits of journalism to obtain exclusive scoops and justified its breach of ethical norms by citing the public's right to know (Ongowo, 2011:2). In Zambia, *The Post* generated controversies for its perceived lack of respect for privacy and by virtue of its provocative content (Phiri, 1999). Even though some Western scholars argue that on many occasions, tabloid journalism subverts the very idea of rationality and that one of its most characteristic tone is that of a sceptical laughter which

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<sup>1</sup> In the view of Örnebring and Maria-Jönsson (2008), the problems of tabloid journalism are, of course, all too well known: it allegedly panders to the lowest common denominator of public taste, it simplifies, it personalises, it thrives on sensation and scandal- in short, tabloid journalism lowers the standards of public discourse. Or even worse, tabloid journalism may even actually be a threat to democracy, breeding cynicism and lack of interest in politics, while ignoring the real political issues in favour of superficial political scandal.

<sup>2</sup> Muckraking models, though drawn from a somewhat romanticised history of American journalism, exhibit great promise in providing a framework that captured what was going on in anti-corruption journalism in Zambia. The idea behind the muckraking model is simple. This (muckraking) imagery implies that muckrakers (investigative journalists) unearth evidence of the problem. The exposure (publication) of the problem leads to the mobilisation of a changed public opinion which in turn is reflected in policy initiative by legislators and administrators, followed by some sort of policy consequence (Phiri, 2008:25).

offers the pleasures of disbelief (Allan, 2004:103), in Africa, tabloids were contributing to democratic causes and were well regarded by the readers as reliable sources of information (Mapudzi, 2009).

In this study, I took a closer look at press freedom and the role of tabloid journalism in an emerging democracy at a time when global print media was in decline (Wasserman, 2010). Through *The Post*, I investigated how tabloid journalists played a critical role in integrating various citizens and other actors; - readers and government authorities within political and social spheres of life (Phiri, 1999). I explored how the tabloid played its role in a popular and civic culture largely ignored by mainstream broadsheets (Kalaluka, 2010).

Apart from *The Post* generating controversies on matters of privacy and taste, it also tended to publish critical editorials (Kasoma, 1996). Appositely, with regard to discussions on editorial commentary, the hallmark of many newspapers that fail to contribute effectively to democratic discourses is persistent interference in editorial content by owners (Curran, 2002). So long as the content of newspapers continues to be influenced by owners, serious questions will remain about democratic governance in any country (Manne, 2011). However, even though ownership interference affects press freedom and democratic discourses, in Africa, issues of government intolerance and dictatorial tendency also seriously hinders press freedom (Karikari, 2004).

In a democracy, the press play a critical role but they can also be a danger to democracy (Amsterdam, 2012). Diversity of content and ownership of press can assist democracy (Tunney, 2007:4). Similarly, Karikari (2004) views the liberalisation of air-waves in Africa and the expansion of print media as having had the most impact on press freedom and on democracy in the continent. Countries without independent radio and television are now few and even in the 15-member Economic Community of West African States only Guinea does not permit private ownership. In East Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have vibrant independent broadcasting stations (Karikari, 2004:184).

With media diversity and pluralism in Africa, there also comes the responsibility on journalists to provide objective news (Karikari, 2004) and to monitor the public decisions that affect the livelihoods of their readers (Phiri, 1999). But, as Atschull (1984) acknowledges, journalists regularly find themselves in an awkward position with regard to professional conduct. They serve many clients that include the public, owners of press institutions, and advertisers. Despite their awkward position, they are obliged to be objective and truthful.

Unfortunately, these expectations are theoretically possible but practically difficult to achieve (Phiri, 1999). For example, *The Post* was often accused of reporting smear political campaigns, blatant lies, and running illogical editorials (Kasoma, 1997b) while at the same time credited for exposing irregularities in the management of public funds (Banda, 2007). It was within the framework of playing a watchdog role over government accountability that the tabloid campaigned for self-regulation in order to be more effective (Kuwema, 2011a). But government authorities often resisted the campaign citing “lack of professionalism among journalists - both from the state-owned and private media” (McKenzie, 2011). On another note, the Internet was slowly broadening the discussions on press regulation and was increasing channels of democratic participation. Unfortunately, it was also widening the knowledge gap among the citizens (Banda, 2010).<sup>3</sup>

I strongly contend that the coming of the Internet age represented a new medium of communication and provided a platform for press freedom especially “its capacity to enable news sites to offer video and audio reports, multimedia slideshows, animated graphics, interactive maps, and so forth” (Allan, 2004:184). However, in Africa, the Internet access by the ordinary citizens was not a majority activity but a privileged medium (Banda, 2010). Moreover, Internet development and expansion was slow with Ghana being the first

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<sup>3</sup> Internet use, as a form of democratic participation, was considered a privilege and a luxury. This made it difficult for citizens to participate fully through this media channel. According to the broadcaster and journalist Walter Cronkite, democracy ceases to be a democracy if its citizens do not participate in its governance. To participate intelligently, citizens must know what their government has done, is doing, and plans to do in their name. Whenever any hindrance, no matter what its name, is placed in the way of this information, a democracy is weakened, and its future endangered (*American Newspaper Association Foundation*, 2005:22).



African country to establish local Internet service in 1994 (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000:6). In Zambia, having said this, the Internet provided the platform for press freedom and for many citizens to express their views (Banda, 2010).

In sum, the press was very vital to democracy despite being suppressed in many African countries (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). In this regard, since journalism outlets were slowly growing (Karikari, 2004), it was vital to define what we mean by press and the scholarly debate that surround our conceptual understanding within the broader discussion of press freedom in democracy.

### **1.1 Defining the press**

In exploring literature in order to understand press freedom and factors that limit journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy, it was important to define the conceptual meaning of the press within political context and within democratic dispensation. Defining the press via scholarly debate and with reference to political context often attracts varieties of standpoints depending on one's economic and political positioning (Ogbondah, 1994). In Africa, the press are often seen to have a role of 'serving the general public. But it seems journalists are abandoning this noble objective for self-serving aims and driven by profit maximisation or political expediency. All too often the press become the accuser, the jury and the judge all rolled up in one as they pounce on one victim after another, all in the name of press freedom and democracy (Kasoma, 1996).

In many scholarly debates about press freedom in Africa, newspapers often take a centre stage. Ocitti (1999) shows a similar pattern in the evolution of all forms of media across the continent which is rooted in colonialism with the intimate links between government and press that led to the birth of colonial government newspapers. Similarly, Ochilo (1993) puts newspapers as a central point of discussions arguing that one cannot talk of press freedom in Africa's emerging democracy without mentioning newspapers which have been very instrumental in political affairs since the period of colonialism.

Defining the press as a theoretical concept is not straight forward in literature debates (Kasoma, 1997a). For example, the phrases 'newspapers' and 'press' are often used interchangeably by different scholars (Altschull, 1995). Even though many definitions of press in political context are often provided by Western scholars (Curran & Seaton, 2010; McNair, 2000), Kasoma (1996) argues that it is very unfortunate that it is difficult to engage literature review without using the West as the measuring stick. Indeed he notes that if one was to subject the African newspapers to scrutiny of how rooted they are in African values the outcome will be that they are foreign bodies in the cultural fabric of Africa (Kasoma, 1996:98).

For example, Seymour (1991:7) defines the press as 'newspapers' because of their origin in the ancient technology of typesetting machines. Similarly, Turow (2009:300) defines the press as newspapers produced on regular basis and released in multiple copies usually not less than once a week. There are other scholars that define press as newspapers that carry up to date news information (McQuail, 2005; Keane, 1991). Furthermore, in defining press, Hiebert *et al.* (1988) use the term frequently stressing that one cannot talk of the press without mentioning newspapers which provide information that allow citizens to make informed decisions. But this does not mean that only the newspapers have an exclusive claim to the term as in the discussion of press freedom struggles in Zambia, Makungu (2004:14) cites examples of radio and television too.

In addition, Mano (2005) notes that press freedom cuts across all the media which include print and broadcasting. Similarly, Whale (1980:11) clarifies that the authorities fear the press because they often find them irritating while only citing examples of newspapers. However, Ogbondah (1994) while discussing press freedom and political development in Africa clarifies that it is not fair to analyse the African press without being inclusive of print and electronic media as they are all sides of the same coin.

Discussing Whale's argument even further, Tunney (2007) cites the Labour political party in Britain and its attitude to News International in dealing with the problem of bias and in calling for a boycott of its newspapers in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the National Executive Committee. He argues that "Labour barred reporters from interviewing or receiving information from party members" (Tunney, 2007:99). Similarly, in Zambia, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy political party (2008-2011) barred senior politicians from being interviewed by *The Post* (Phiri, 2008). Chief Government Spokesperson Lieutenant General Ronnie Shikapwasha treated the daily tabloid as 'enemy fire' and often subjected it to heavy intimidation and harassment (Chama, 2012).

In Whale's view of the press as newspapers, it is important to stress that, despite authorities finding them irritating and often annoying, newspapers do not entirely determine what people think but merely guide their thinking (Ogbondah, 1994). In Zambia, politicians were anxious that the newspapers shared their judgement of democracy. But, they were often disappointed when they thought otherwise (Banda, 2007). For example, *The Post* was often a regular target of violence from political cadres (Chirwa, 1996). There were numerous incidents of government authorities using arcane legislation to water down its reporting (Leepile, 1996:30).

*The Post* originally ran once a week (Mungonge, 2007). In November 1993 became twice a week, and finally in October 1995 was published daily providing variety of information for the general public within democracy (Yoler *et al.*, 2007; Banda, 2006; Phiri, 1999). It was instrumental in the democratic participation of its readers, but was criticised on several occasions for being irresponsible in its coverage of news (Kasoma, 1995). Interestingly, those who often criticised *The Post* as irresponsible often ignored other issues such as ownership and market interests (Mungonge, 2007; Camrose, 1947); - the question is whether the press can be politically compassionate and survive? This issue is further discussed in Chapter Two and Five.

Defining the press is problematic but it is historically clear when one positions its origin in the ancient technology of print that led to mass communication of newspapers (Camrose, 1947). But in some other literature sources, the term is often used interchangeably with other mass media (Makungu, 2004). For example, any press conference does not only encompass newspaper journalists but also other mass media representatives (McNair, 2000).

However, many African scholarly sources tend to stress the centrality of newspapers as opposed to broadcasting when discussing press freedom in political processes and within emerging democracies partly because of their impact in the history of transition from colonialism (Mano, 2005; Ocitti, 1999; Kasoma, 1996; Ochilo, 1993). On the other hand, others claim that discussing press freedom ought to incorporate print and electronic media to provide a fairer media landscape (Karikari, 2004; Phiri, 1999).

## **1.2. Independent press**

In Africa, an independent press is vital for the development of a healthy political economy for its ability to unearth fraud, theft, corruption, bribery, embezzlement, smuggling, and export-import swindles (Phiri, 2008). Generally, an independent press is vital for exposing illicit economic ventures inherent in the ruling class which have been identified as part of the reason for the failure of many development projects (Ogbondah, 1994:1).

In discussing press freedom and the factors that limit journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy, Chirwa (1996) notes that the independent press is vital for democracy. But factors that prevents its realisation often attracts scholarly debates especially on whether the press can be independent in their entirety (Mano, 2005). Furthermore, Kasoma (1995) argues that the independent press owned by private entities are instrumental channels for the maturity of democracy in many African countries. Similarly, Makungu (2004) explains that the transition from colonialism in many emerging democracies was largely because of the contributions of the independent press. In addition, Phiri (1999) points out that the government owned press cannot be independent as its journalists often

tend to pander to the whims of the ruling politicians. Critically, whether being independent from government or private control does not make the press immune from their owner's influence and control (Phiri, 1999).

*The Post* was privately owned and classified itself as an independent market-leading newspaper (Mungonge, 2007:1). In my literature review, the independent press is often presented as a scrutinising medium that is capable of empowering citizens with balanced information that monitors government's decision-making processes effectively (Ogbonnah, 1994). Scrutiny and provision of balanced information is not always possible for the independent press; to talk of an independent press is to fail to recognise that every press institution is someone else's property and an instrument of power (Altschull, 1995:5). Any newspaper either government or independently run has its own inherent problems such as advertising and ownership influence (Altschull, 1995). Besides, Makungu (2004) castigates the independent press in Zambia arguing that they have often been used by their owners to either build-up or destroy politicians citing examples of Frank Moore, Alexander Scott and Roy Welensky who all used their newspapers as stepping stones into political careers (Makungu, 2004:14).<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, press institutions which are owned by either government or private institutions cannot be independent as all owners have power to intervene (de Beer & Merrill, 2009:298). For example, *The Post* as will be seen in Chapters Five and Six was privately owned but vulnerable to the owners' intervention (Phiri, 1999). Similarly, the government-owned press were not protected from owners' intervention (Kasoma, 1995:539). The thorny issue is whether or not journalists are capable of providing a 'duly impartial' account of the social world; this "has long preoccupied many researchers interested in the operation of the news media in modern societies" (Allan, 2004:25). According to Kasoma (1996), the answer in

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Raphael Roy Welensky was the second and last Prime Minister of British Colony Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). He was the publisher of *Northern News* and used it extensively to support his own political interests. Leopold Frank Moore owned *Livingston Mail* for white settlers. He used it to suppress native Africans and to campaign for his own political positions. Alexander Scott run *Central African Post* and used it to champion his own interest. His newspaper tended to be sensational in its reportage of information (Chibangu, 2000).

redeeming some respectability for the men and women of the pen lies in going back to the primordial ethical checks and balance that have existed in the African society and ensured reasonably good moral order. The author further notes that the tragedy facing African journalism is that the continent's journalists are closely imitating the professional norms of the Western concept of press freedom which they see as the epitome of good journalism (Kasoma, 1996:95).

Nonetheless, many sources argue that the press ought to be independent because citizens are always suspicious of news which persistently backs particular views (Boyce & Curran, 1978:34). Citizens want news that is not oriented towards propaganda (Phiri, 1999). In Africa, there has been a significant increase over the last two decades in media outlets (Karikari, 2004:184). Consequently, it is becoming more difficult for government owned press to sustain political propaganda (Tettey, 2002). For example, *The Post* always backed particular political positions despite citizens able to access other news sources.<sup>5</sup>

On another note, considering Zambia's difficult economic conditions, the newspaper ought to be worthy buying (Banda, 2007). But the newspaper that persistently publishes information holding views of particular political groups is not worth buying (Mano, 2005). In fact, such newspapers are better off distributed free as political campaign newsletters (Phiri, 1999). In addition, the leading principle among many advertisers is that such newspapers are not good platforms for adverts and shun away from them (Boyce & Curran, 1978:34). Advertising is critical for the survival of newspapers. Even though there are few documented examples of newspapers that survive on other income other than advertising, "newspaper finances are atypical within business (Phiri, 2008). Like other media, newspapers operate in two markets simultaneously. Readers consume the newspapers in one market and are sold to advertisers in another. Advertising is the main source of revenue for many newspapers" (Tunney, 2007:10).

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<sup>5</sup> These kinds of recklessness reduced readership and, more significantly, the newspaper's ability to influence the agenda of the nation. Many readers rarely saw the newspaper as a reliable source of information and read it mainly for entertainment than substance (Phiri, 1999:62).

Apart from advertising challenges, *The Post* was not free from the owner's influence on editorial content (Amsterdam, 2012). I have discussed this issue in detail in Chapter Five and Six. Similarly, studies conducted in Britain show that press owners are capable of using newspapers to express political propaganda or, at the very least, consistent partisanship (Manne, 2011). For example, *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express* were all at one time victims of owners' drive to unleash relentless political propaganda in pursuit of political influence in an attempt to set a policy agenda for the government (Curran & Seaton, 2010). Furthermore, Camrose (1947) analyses British newspapers and their controllers arguing that owners are capable of exerting pressure on news content and dissemination.

In discussing Zimbabwe's journalism and ownership influence, Mano (2005) notes that the public and the private media owners have created 'regimes' that undermine professional and ethical norms of journalism. He explains that what is more troubling is that journalists have resigned themselves to these developments seeing them as 'normal' and finding it natural that they have to adjust their professional roles to suit the new environment. He further notes however that not all journalists should take the blame, others have 'resisted' and 'rebelled' against the pressures exerted on them by private and public media owners (Mano, 2005:56).

Therefore, there are many disagreements about the notion of an independent press and whether newspapers can be independent (Tunstall, 1996:19). This is partly because of the many political dynamics that impact on the general operations of media institutions making them vulnerable to many stakeholders (Karikari, 2004). During my fieldwork, tabloid journalists shared mixed observations on this issue. For example, some respondents stressed that the owner's political interests made it difficult to pursue some stories (Amsterdam, 2012), while others felt it was the market interests that played a vital role (Phiri, 2008).

Another respondent John Kaputo (who declined to be identified in preference for a pseudonym) noted that it was always difficult to sensationalise news because of political and

legal risks; sensational news on government failings was often castigated by political authorities for alarming the nation (Ochilo, 1993). He further noted that this was because of the political culture of intolerance and government spending of public resources which was shrouded in secrecy (Banda, 2007). Drawing insights from Ongowo (2011), the intimidation of journalists that expose corruption and embezzlement of public funds by government is a common occurrence across the continent. For example, Kenyan *Society and Finance* magazines were closed down in 1993 after their editors' criticised mismanagement of public funds by government (Ogbondah, 1994:14). Similarly, editor of Nigerian *Herald*, a government-controlled newspaper was demoted in 1977 for criticising government for building an ultra-modern sports complex in Illorin pointing out that the money should have been spent on basic social amenities like water and electricity for the masses (Ogbondah, 1994:5).

Looking at another issue of market interests within these discussions of independent press, *The Post* was not independent of market interests and as a 'mass-circulation' press, raised a great deal of its revenues simply from its cover price (African Media Barometer, 2009). But still, the revenues from cover prices were not sufficient considering the low circulation figures and poor reading culture (Banda, 2006). During my fieldwork (2011-2012), *The Post* supported government policies and benefitted from advertising revenues (Amsterdam, 2012).

My literature review shows that newspapers which are sympathetic to governments often flourish but that change of government usually brings on operational challenges (Ocitti, 1999; Camrose, 1947). Government changes often made *The Post* struggle to survive (1991-2011) due to the legal and political intimidation (Chama, 2012). But also partnerships often compromised its independent position and its sales usually plunged to its lowest levels (Amsterdam, 2012). The point here is that, either supporting government or being a critic as a newspaper has its own professional and political challenges (Mano, 2005).



During my fieldwork (2011-2012), the relationships that existed between *The Post* and the government heavily affected its objectivity (Amsterdam, 2012). If the tabloid was not tied to any political party, it could have been more objective to some extent (Kasoma, 1997a). But again, even when it was not supporting the government prior 2011, it tended to support opposition political parties and politicians (Banda, 2004). Generally, democracy requires representation of various voices, and in political terms, the interests of democracy are served when a range of ideas are represented (Phiri, 1999). Within this context, "it has been suggested that democracy requires there to be an allocation of newspaper and media resources for the persuasion of views that is roughly the same as the distribution of opinions in society" (Tunney, 2007:3).

It follows that the newspaper cannot be independent once tied to particular politicians because it tends to be less critical of mismanagement of public accountability (Ogbondah, 1994). Importantly, the duty of journalists' to seek out the truth above all things and to present it to their readers becomes completely compromised when they join government supporters (Phiri, 1999). The ideal of non-partisan reporting is a matter of scholarly debate; some media institutions tend to train journalists to adopt norms of reporting news to suit the temper of their organs (Allan, 2004:16-17). Similarly, Mano (2005) notes that it is common knowledge that journalists get re-trained when they join news rooms and on the face of it there is nothing wrong as it is normal to re-train someone joining another organisation on the dos and don'ts. He further notes that in many press institutions, this goes further than the usual re-orientation and becomes a thoroughly ideological repositioning of new recruits in the norms of the profession according to press proprietors policies and politics (Mano, 2005:56).

As already stressed, the press heavily depend on advertising revenues in order to survive (Phiri, 2008). This suggests that whether the press are substantially run for profit or not they are more dependent on the patronage of advertisers than of readers. This makes it difficult for journalists to adequately scrutinise corporate power when it may also be the provider of major advertisers (Curran, 2002:80).

The common perception among many scholars is that advertisers have the power to secure favourable treatment of their products by the press. Crucially, many advertisers are also often major sources of news (Curran, 1978). Since the press relies heavily on revenues from advertisers, they are under much pressure not to offend them or, indeed, readers, as the drop in readership can lead to reduction in advertising revenues (Ocitti, 1999; Ocitti, 1991). Normally, the press draw a large proportion of revenues from advertisers and tend to look at potential readers as segments of 'consumer-dom' (Banda, 2004; Smith, 1979). Similarly, *The Post* heavily depended on advertisers and even published a classified edition *Sangwapo* which merely carried wide range of adverts bearing sensational pictures (Phiri, 2008).

Many of my literature sources further reveal that the press cannot be entirely free from editorial interference (Mano, 2005). For example, there is documented evidence to show that total editorial autonomy in many independent newspapers cannot be achieved because news stories reflect interests of owners and financiers (African Media Barometer, 2009). Owners in market-based press institutions have ultimate power over content and can ask for what to include or left out (Manne, 2011). In fact, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence to show that this power is used in practice in many press institutions (Curran & Seaton, 1988). Similarly, Mano (2005) notes that interviews with journalists from Zimbabwe's *The Herald*, *The Standard*, *Daily Mirror* and *Financial Gazette* acknowledge writing one-sided news stories to fit the political interests of their financiers and owners (Mano, 2005:57).

But Philip Meyer's study which draws on data mainly gathered in the United States reveals that sometimes owners in some press institutions do provide editorial independence (Meyer, 1987). Nonetheless, even though research shows editorial autonomy in some press institutions on particular news stories, owners still have the power to interfere (Mano, 2005). Regardless of their influence, many editors feel comfortable working independently and often frown at the owners' intervention (Meyer, 1987). *The Post* owner sometimes sat in the diary meetings but did not take part in daily editorial decisions (African Media Barometer,

2009). Incidentally, some respondents confirmed during my fieldwork that the owner took part in some meetings and would even suggest stories and people to interview. Analytically, once the newspaper owner dictates who to interview and talk to in the process of making news; then the editorial freedom and independence boundary has been crossed and the news becomes the image of the owner (Kasoma, 1996).

In short, an independent press with editorial freedom is difficult to achieve because owners have political predilections and “editors are under the same pressure to conform by rejecting or cutting articles however competently written” (Curran, 1978:224). This is despite the common perception that editors should be free to produce news without interference with their journalistic judgement (Meyer, 1987). The journalistic demand for impartiality is a difficult ‘value-free’ commitment which has implications in professional practice as Allan (2004:23) indicates that many of the most passionate advocates of ‘objective journalism’ were the very editors and publishers intent on opposing the unionisation of their newspaper. From this self-serving perspective, a journalist could hardly be a dispassionate, non-partisan observer while, the same time, belonging to such a ‘controversial’ organisation as a union. Furthermore, Mano (2005) notes that many journalists find themselves in an awkward position and are aware that what they do is unprofessional and contradictory and conform to managers and owners directives seeing it as a natural thing in order to keep up with the bills (Mano, 2005:57).

In many scholarly debates on press freedom in Africa, both private and independent media institutions are not free from their owners’ influence and interfere in the daily operations either directly or in a very subtle way (Kasoma, 2000; Phiri, 1999; Ogbondah, 1994). Similarly, some Western scholars provide documented evidence showing that an individual owner who adopts a strict non-interventionist approach is a rare figure indeed (Manne, 2011; Camrose, 1947). For example, Tunstall (1996:79) compares editors to football coaches in this age of press lords, moguls, and macho managers. Editors have become potent figures in much the same way as coaches of major football teams. The new editor is given money and a trial period in charge, just like a football coach. If an editor makes an initial success,

they may become a high profile and enduring figure in the press industry. But the word of caution which has become part of received wisdom in the press industry is that detailed editorial interference is often the hallmark of the inept and unsuccessful newspaper owner (Meyer, 1987). Other scholarly debates in many African countries in fact, further show that there is need for the general public to be equally vigilant of the controls coming from the private media owners that can undermine press freedom and democracy (Mano, 2005:67).

### **1.3. Press freedom**

This study's main argument is on press freedom and factors that limit journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy. In order to provide a framework to understand the study very well, the concept, 'free press,' or rather press freedom needs to be defined while looking at various scholarly debates (Kasoma, 1996). Even though virtually every Constitution in the world has guaranteed freedom of the press, the term has been interpreted differently according to the needs and traditions of each country (Ogbonnah, 1994:9).

Although there have been advances on press freedom in many countries, still challenges exist particularly in Africa (Chirwa, 1996). For example, Karikari (2004) views the key challenge facing journalists is the varying degrees of intimidations and repression. He argues further that investigation into the corrupt practices of government officials have been the central focus with key editors and reporters becoming specialists in the field and increasingly finding themselves under attack as a consequence (Karikari, 2004:186).

Tabloid journalism continues to spark controversies in many African countries with many scholarly debates questioning its contributions to democracy and to press freedom (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2008). For example, since its inception in 1991 (Chirwa, 1996), *The Post* strove for press freedom and formed a Press Freedom Committee which regularly brought together interest groups and civil society organisations (Mungonge, 2007). It also commenced an annual award that was given to a person who contributed heavily to

the attainment of press freedom. Despite all these efforts, the tabloid journalists I interviewed revealed that press freedom was difficult to enjoy regularly (Chama, 2012).

Mixed scholarly discussions exist on press freedom and for some, it is a degree of freedom from restraint which is essential to enable owners, editors, and journalists to advance the public interest by publishing the facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgement (Curran, 1978:225). Unfortunately this degree of freedom is unobtainable in many African countries and the major fault lies not in prejudiced owners, circulation-crazed editors or incompetent journalists, but in a web of vague legal doctrines which catch facts and opinions essential for informed scrutiny of social power (Karikari, 2004). Generally, press freedom ensures that citizens have a right to full information about decisions made by political authorities. It brings about informed citizens leading to transparency in government operations (Banda, 2007). Access to information helps citizens to monitor government decision making more effectively. This in turn, enhances the role of journalists in analysing and passing on information to the general public (Phiri, 2008).

Press freedom, such as the right of the press to publish information without much hinderance from authorities, should go with responsibility (McQuail, 2003:556). Furthermore, responsible press freedom by journalists enhances the capacity of the press to publish news in order to respond to the totality of society (Curran & Seaton, 2010). Unfortunately, this level of freedom is difficult to achieve because of many political challenges and vague legal doctrines (Chama, 2012). In many African countries, intolerance of opposing views by government makes responsible journalism irrelevant (Chirwa, 1996). As Ogbondah (1994) notes that many African prisons are crowded with courageous and responsible journalists who are not prepared to accept dictation of what they may or may not print (Ogbondah, 1994:9).

There are various theories that have been proposed in order to understand press freedom in political affairs (Ocitti, 1999). In the libertarian theory, press freedom is the ability of the

press to play a 'watchdog' role over government accountability in order to make sure it serves citizens' needs. In watchdog journalism, the press should be committed to 'the truth' and must never hesitate to uncover and expose lies, deceit and misrepresentation regardless of consequences (Allan, 2004:46). However, watchdog journalism has resulted in the death of many journalists in Africa by government agents in the quest to suppress press freedom (Ogbondah, 1994). For example, Bibi Ngota died in Yaonde jail in Cameroun in 2010 while awaiting trial for possessing government confidential documents (Federation of African Journalists, 2010).

Overall, then, press freedom is like a two-edged sword that should protect individual rights while check on government operations (Hiebert *et al.*, 1988:600). But monitoring government operations makes the press often to cast a blind eye on corporate companies which also require public scrutiny (Curran, 1978). For example, *The Post* did better in exposing government policies and accountability than abuses of citizens by corporate organisations (Phiri, 2008). Generally, the level of monitoring of government accountability by many African journalists is often higher than corporate organisation (Ongowo, 2011).

The authoritarian theory holds that press freedom should communicate and support government policies (Merrill, 1974). The Government imposes licences which can be revoked if the press criticises authorities (Hamasaka, 2008). In fact, many African countries share a similar heritage of colonialism and authoritarian form of governance which tend to impact on press freedom (Ochilo, 1993). For example, *The Post* operated in an environment with a history of an authoritarian regime which ruled the country for 28 years.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Kaunda ruled the Southern African country from 1964 to 1991. The Zambian dictator enjoyed enormous prestige, partly due to the survival of his charisma from the pre-independence era, and more so due to the personal cult that inevitably developed with long years in office, and an active veneration of the leader usually common in one-party states. As an official, he enjoyed enormous power, for the Constitution was tailored in such a manner as to match his views of leadership. Thus the amount of personal respect and Constitutional powers conferred upon him created a tendency to regard his word as law. He was considered the government, his responsibility were entire and undivided. Executive power was vested in him alone, and in the exercise of it he was bound by no one else's advice. Within him too was the ultimate responsibility for policy (Lungu, 1986:388).

Characteristics of authoritarian tendencies were often exhibited by authorities' regular threats to deregister and close down the tabloid newspaper (Hamasaka, 2008).

Often the restrictive measures to close down press institutions critical of government operations are hallmarks of totalitarian and suppressive regimes (Landau, 1984). Authorities are usually threatened by press freedom as it empowers the readers to be critical participants through disclosure of information (Turner, 2000:36). Besides, government authorities are uncomfortable with press institutions able to cast a watchful eye over bureaucracy to prevent outbreak of nepotism (Keane, 1991:15). At times, authorities are careful not to allow the press to open flood gates of criticisms that serve to divide the nation (McQuail, 1994:129). The ruling class in authoritarian regimes regulate the production and distribution of ideas; "thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Allan, 2004:48).

In many African countries, authorities tend to monitor closely press institutions critical of government operations very carefully (Ogbondah, 1994). The level of press freedom suppression in many African countries is often unjustifiable (Chirwa, 1996). For example, Banda (2007) argues that it is because of the poor management of public funds which authorities want to remain hidden and as thus tend to subject critical citizens to threats of imprisonment (Federation of African Journalists, 2010).

When discussing press freedom within the legal context, many Western scholars note that press freedom should be oriented towards the right to publish anything provided the law of libel is observed (Moorhouse, 1964; McQuail, 2005). But this freedom is difficult to enjoy in many African countries because of often vague legal guidelines (Chama, 2012). Libel does more damage to press freedom and more particularly to journalists in court-room battles (Himaambo, 2010). In sharp contrast, press freedom can be enhanced by freedom of information legislation which challenges bureaucratic secrecy and provides legal access to information on government bodies and companies about their operations (Curran, 1978:209). Unfortunately, freedom of information legislation in many African countries is often resisted by many authorities and the reason is attributed to rampant corruption (Phiri,

2008). Some scholars point out that African authorities want to keep citizens away from the knowledge of financial mismanagement to avoid opening floodgates of criticisms that can lead to eventual loss of grip on power (Banda, 2007). For example, my research in Chapters Four and Six discovered that *The Post's* journalists were regularly subjected to libel claims. To make matters even more complex, the tabloid operated without freedom of information legislation making its journalists more vulnerable to law suits (Phiri, 2008).<sup>7</sup>

At times, press freedom often stands in opposition to the right to privacy and to enjoyment of a personal life free from prurient curiosity especially in many African emerging democracies (Wasserman, 2010). However, in my view, journalists should respect the privacy of others and avoid invasion into their intimate joys and grief. But, again, the press should be able to expose hypocrisies and set the record straight (Phiri, 2008). Exposure of hypocrisy among public figures helps to inform the readers to make their own opinions (Aspinal, 1973). For example, *The Post* was very critical in exposing hypocrisy among political authorities including labelling the incumbent President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) a thief and a brigand which often resulted in the arrest of its journalists for libel (Phiri, 2008). Similarly, Ogbondah (1994) notes that the level of corruption is so high in many African countries and often tend to hide under the veil of right to privacy laws. In this regards, journalists need to monitor carefully hypocrisy among government authorities to expose such illicit economic venture while being aware of privacy laws (Banda, 2007; Chanda, 1998).

Therefore, based on this literature review, the debate on press freedom and factors that limit journalists' contribution to democracy is inconclusive (Kasoma, 1996). Many scholars often take different positions depending on the nature of the ownership (Makungu, 2004). But to bring this discussion to a close, it is important to highlight that press freedom should involve

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<sup>7</sup> There was no freedom of information law in Zambia which challenges bureaucratic secrecy and assists the press in revealing illegal activities by public bodies. The legislation also provides the legal right to access documents produced by government bodies and imposes legal obligations upon companies to disclose details of their operations. In countries where freedom of information legislation has been enacted it has assisted in spectacular press revelations of illegal activities and other benefits "have been apparent in quality and range of press investigations stimulated by the disclosures" (Curran, 1978:209).



informing the readers and authorities what it means to be poor among the rich, hungry among the well fed, and sick among the healthy in a society noisy with messages (Meyer, 1987). Press freedom should communicate sentiments common to the public even though such sentiments may not be shared by all citizens (Kasoma, 1996). Press freedom should communicate the basis upon which all decisions which affect the common good are made (Conboy, 2002).

There are other scholars that note that press freedom should resonate with the moods and minds of the readers and should reflect public opinion rather than building it (Smith, 1979:147). It is perhaps one of the reasons why a newspaper campaign can only flourish once it is in tune with public opinion and if it is able to stimulate new ideas to a problem which angers average readers (Moorhouse, 1964:85-86).

Another view is that press freedom should be rooted in the 'free market of ideas' in which the best should be recognised and the worst should be exposed (McQuail, 1994:128-129). In fact, all the definitions on what press freedom should entail are valid and important, but from an African perspective, Kasoma (1996) proposes that press freedom should be rooted in African society and ethical roots of service to the poor and the marginalised. It ought to be society-centred rather than money and power-centred which always wants to have the last word on issues and hardly admits any wrong doing (Kasoma, 1996:96).

In Africa, the press is often accused of going on the defensive whenever press freedom is discussed and often tabloids suffer heavy criticisms. This is partly because they tend to stretch the limits of press freedom by emphasizing personal lives above the public interests (Ongowo, 2011). In addition, tabloid journalism practice tends to create controversies and many scholars question its contribution to democracy (Mapudzi, 2009).

#### 1.4. Defining tabloid press

In many African countries, the perception of tabloids is varied as they are fairly a new form of genre (Wasserman, 2008). Some scholars often see them as reactionary to broadsheets and infected with sentimentality which appeals to readers' emotions rather than their intellect (Mapunzi, 2009). Other scholars argue that tabloids are favoured to broadsheets as they stretch the professional and ethical norms of journalism practice (Ongowo, 2011). In fact, in discussing tabloid journalism and journalists' role within democracy, it was important to define the concept of tabloid press within a broader subject area and within scholarly debate in Africa. This was partly because my study was on an African tabloid within an emerging democracy.

Tabloid journalism was changing the perception of journalistic practice in emerging democracies in Africa (Wasserman, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). During fieldwork, the Government was making frantic efforts to clamp down on sensational reporting (Chama, 2012). The future of tabloid journalism practice looked very unpredictable and precarious especially with regard to its populist partisan interventions, its celebrity-oriented and sexualised news agenda, as well as its use of aggressive methods such as cheque-book journalism and paparazzi coverage which made it controversial (Mapundzi, 2009).

Yet the future of tabloid journalism in Africa depended not only upon government authorities but also on the tabloid journalists and the owners of such press institutions. For example, the closure of Zimbabwe's *Daily News* was attributed to journalists' inherent professional standards which conspired with the fragile political environment (Moyo, 2005). Therefore, tabloid journalists within emerging democracies needed to be more professional to influence citizens effectively (Kasoma, 1996). Tabloid journalists through sensational coverage of news can play a critical role in emerging democracy to influence instruments of power (Phiri, 2008). They can hold the government authorities accountable through sensational language but also need to be aware of the dangers their work impacts on their lives (Ongowo, 2011).

Some scholars argue that tabloidization is within the larger imperatives that are shaping journalism practice (Deuze, 2005; Bird, 1990). They argue its fragmentation divide the audience (Allan, 2004:207). In many African countries, for example, tabloids expose massive corruption in government operations (Ongowo, 2011). Unfortunately, tabloid journalism practice also exposes many reporters to arrests and intimidations because of its brazen sexual content, unrestrictive truth searching and the use of often questionable tactics (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2010; Mapudzi, 2009).

During my fieldwork, tabloid journalists complained of intimidation and harassment whenever they presented critical views on government operations (Phiri, 2011). Others felt that the government was too intolerant of opposing views (Chama, 2012). For example, Conboy and Steel (2010) argue that tabloid journalism should be viewed as representatives of the masses, and according to the philanthropic view, as people who stand on behalf of other people, and through a platonic view, as enlightened individuals who reflect the best interests of the people.

Interestingly, in many African countries, tabloid journalists are now occupying the space of speaking for the masses within the broader context of press freedom like South Africa's *Daily Voice*, *Son*, and *Sunday Sun* for their explicit depiction of township social problems (Wasserman, 2008). Similarly in Zambia, *The Post* before joining the Government support from 2011, an issue I have discussed in Chapters Five and Six, reported sensational news rooted in educator-journalists (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

Defining tabloid journalism within the broader scholarly debate of press freedom was not easy within emerging democracies (Kasoma, 1996). Historically, the term 'tabloid' is derived from the word 'tablet,' originally designated; a particular newspaper format measuring half a broadsheet (Wasserman, 2008). In fact, the world's first tabloid, the British *Daily Mirror*, combined this format from 1903 with an emphasis on brief stories, large pictures, and

sensational headlines (Gripsrud, 2008:37).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, many tabloids across the African continent have characteristics of formats measuring half the broadsheet with sensational pictures and headlines (Ongowo, 2011; Karikari, 2004; Fliess & Sandeen, 2000).

Defining 'tabloid' was a very difficult task "as the term refers not only to changing formats in shifting historical and industrial contexts but to the attitudes and values that are commonly attached to these formats" (Biressi & Nunn, 2008:7).<sup>9</sup> For example, in investigating South Africa's tabloids representation of black celebrities within the social constructionist perspective, Matsebatlela (2009) argues that there is little doubt that tabloids representation of society serve as mirrors to how some members of society behave. Similarly, *The Post* published sensational stories accompanied by sensational pictures (Phiri, 1999). It tended to focus on stories of human interest presented in form of one person making remarks and allegations against another (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

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<sup>8</sup> In his study, Sparks (2000), defines what we mean by tabloid obviously changes over time, and as a consequence it is very difficult to make a meaningful statement about the origins or development of the tabloid. Thus, while we can say that newspapers that were tabloid in physical size and that were regarded by contemporaries as embodying new and shocking kind of journalism emerged in Britain in the first decade of the twentieth century, in the third decade in the United States, after World War II in parts of Central and Northern Europe, and only after the fall of Communism in Hungary, such statements do not take us very far towards understanding exactly what each kind of newspaper is or was like. Nor is it the case that, within any one country, the look and content of a tabloid remains the same over its lifetime. Discussions in this area face the twin problems of overgeneralization and over specificity. It seems regrettably, to be the case that it is both true to say that there have long been tabloid media and true to say that the world has never seen anything like what we observe today, and such a contradiction does not take us very far (Sparks, 2000:17-18).

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Sparks and Tulloch (2000) provide a helpful model for unpacking the various ways in which the term tabloid is used and the values attached to them. Firstly, and originally, the term refers to newspaper and then broadcast journalistic output that prioritises entertainment, human interest and commercial profitability and which is usually presented as opposition to 'serious' and socially responsible journalism. Secondly, the term refers to changing priorities within a given medium such as television leading, for example, to a diminution of serious programming or its marginalization in the schedules and the adoption across the board of entertainment-led values. Finally, it can refer to tabloid content itself. Sparks gives the well-known examples of the *Jerry Springer Show* and the work of American 'shockjock' radio presenter Rush Limbaugh whose shows are open to criticism for their voyeuristic and shameless exploitation of ordinary people in the case of Springer and for controversial populist, highly conservative rhetoric in the case of Limbaugh (Biressi & Nunn, 2008:7).

Some scholars argue that tabloidization in itself is a term more of a journalistic buzzword than a scholarly concept which connotes decay; a lowering of journalistic standards that ultimately undermines the ideal functions of mass media in democracies (Bird, 1990; Biressi & Nunn, 2008). Others note that to put it very briefly, some forms of tabloid journalism may be good for some purposes and not for others, while some other forms are probably good for nothing much (Gripsrud, 2008:34-35). In Africa, many scholars on tabloid journalism claim that despite creating controversies, the tabloid media tend to expose corruption regularly and appeal to many sections of society (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2010; Mapudzi, 2009).

The term 'tabloidization' is tied to, if not a full-blown moral panic, then at least serious ethical and political worries (Ongowo, 2011). Complaints about the deplorable features of much journalism have increased since the birth of tabloids (Bird, 1990). On the other hand, Kasoma (1996) suggests that many of the problems facing tabloid journalists in Africa are because of copying the Western form of practice which is profit oriented with no regard to the rights of others while turning vulnerable citizens into objects of news and manipulation. He further points out that anyone who proposes rooting African tabloid journalism in African social-ethics is considered anathema and old fashioned while in real sense, African journalism can teach the Westerners some journalistic manners as well (Kasoma, 1996:9).

Many literature sources reveal that the tabloids tend to be sensational, trivial, and sometimes irresponsible in the coverage of news (McQuail, 2005; Allan, 2004). However, this is not often the case in Africa as tabloids tend to be whistle blowers in exposing financial mismanagement in public services (Ogbondah, 1994). Even though not primarily interested in politics, tabloids play a political role at key moments because of their sensational style of reporting (Global Journalist, 2000). On the other hand, tabloids also tend to be vulnerable to vague legal guidelines common to many African countries (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). Furthermore, tabloids also tend to prioritise entertainment, human interest, and

commercial profitability often seen as contrary to social responsible journalism (Mapudzi, 2009; Biressi & Nunn, 2008).<sup>10</sup>

Generally, the content of tabloids ranges from stories of human interest in dramatic and sensational style to lives of celebrities and popular figures (Mapudzi, 2009). They tend to focus on general gossip that make allegations about personal behaviour of popular figures (Tunstall, 1996:11). All these stories tend to be presented in a dramatic fashion with Mapudzi (2009) giving an example of South Africa's *Daily Sun* whose headlines ranges from amusing stories of 'Raped by Gorilla' to shocking headlines of 'Girlfriend Ate My Baby'. Despite the different characteristic content of tabloids, they share key similarities which focus mainly on entertainment and sensational human interest stories (Wasserman, 2008).

There are other groups of tabloids whose content includes investigative reports of news within emerging democracies (Ongowo, 2011) and "what matters is to figure out how events out there can be infiltrated and finally given meaning with truth, factuality, and historical accuracy" (Debrix, 2008:6).<sup>11</sup> However, investigative stories expose many tabloid journalists to political harassment as authorities tend to be uncomfortable with sensational reporting of corruption (Matsebatlela, 2009; Mapudzi, 2009).

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<sup>10</sup> Arguments that tabloid journalism is simply one genre of reporting among many is persuasive up to a point- surely only the most naïve journalist would cling to the idea that newspapers simply transmit 'reality' to the printed page, unaffected by preconceptions, formulaic story patterns, and other considerations. Yet at the same time, tabloid writers continue to maintain that, above all, they are in the entertainment business. Unfettered by any need to 'inform' their readers, they are able to exercise their creativity in, to say the least, more flamboyant directions, and thus they can afford to neglect such journalistic concepts as 'balance.' After all, the best and most vivid stories are consistent and clear in their point of view; competing interpretations are anathema to a good tabloid tale (Bird, 2008:256-257).

<sup>11</sup> Many tabloid writers have training or experience in regular journalism and claim to apply the same basic strategy. The tabloid writers are the first to agree that their story styles are formulaic, that they gather quotes and facts to construct a story with the intended structure and content. But again they compare this kind of storytelling to that used by other journalists. They argue that tabloid writers are not unique in pursuing a particular 'angle' to a story, that angle in the end defining what questions are asked, which sources are interviewed, and which story is ultimately presented as 'the truth' (Bird, 2008:254-256).

On another level, tabloids content have an over-whelming interest in personalities (Matsebatlela, 2009). Their front page headlines are often full of political leaders attacking their opponents (Kasoma, 1996). Their material contents are often full of big pictures accompanied by big headlines (Phiri, 1999). But tabloids format of being printed on a page about half the size of a broadsheet (Yoler *et al.*, 2007) can be somehow confusing as some traditionally known broadsheets are now being printed on half their traditional broadsheet size while maintaining the same news content of broadsheets (Deuze, 2005; Curran, 1978).

Analytically, there are some newspapers that operate in half the size of broadsheets for economic reasons (McNair, 2000). However, regardless of their content and characteristic format, tabloids are changing the journalism practice in many African countries and exposing vague legal guidelines that undermine press freedom (Ogbondah, 1994). But still, the formats of many tabloids have major stories running in few lines (Wasserman, 2008). Their structural format is meant to draw the reader through the entire paper looking at all the pages (Tunstall, 1996:11-12). They tend to present stories of shock and awe that easily trigger debate on public and private affairs (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2010; Moyo, 2005; Karikari, 2004).

Tabloids also rely primarily on sales and advertising revenues (McManus, 1994). For example, *The Post* depended more heavily on sales and advertising and was able to charge advertisers high rates due to its ability to display advertising pictures favourably (Mathurine, 2004). It was also characterised by sensational adverts accompanied by plenty of pictures to attract many readers (Chirwa, 1996).

There are different tabloids just as there are different broadsheets. Even though tabloids exist in different formats, they share some key characteristics (Ongowo, 2011). Some tabloids not only “focus on light news, the entertainment touch, and human interest” (Tunstall, 1996:11), but also on hard news and investigations (Phiri, 2008). Within the hard news columns, there are also columns with news on crime, sex, sport, and show business (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). Critics of tabloids contend that they often “erode ‘serious’ journalistic

criteria of newsworthiness and threaten to undermine the integrity of the 'quality' end of news reporting spectrum" (Allan, 2004:206). But supporters claim that tabloids are able to engage the general public on issues largely ignored by broadsheets especially in many African countries where broadsheets are largely owned by government institutions (Ongowo, 2011). In Africa, generally, tabloids are mainly owned by private entities and therefore, restrictive measures on truth seeking are often minimal in comparison (Wasserman, 2010; Phiri, 2008).

I should stress here that *The Post* was a popular 'lower tabloid' and its stories were more than the 'quick read' tabloids (Yoler *et al*, 2007). Its stories were densely written and dealt in information and entertainment (Kasoma, 1996). Its brazen sexual content was within the information touch but was also intended to improve sales by attracting uncritical readers (Amsterdam, 2012). Therefore, many citizens read the tabloid for entertainment and for information as well (Phiri, 2008).

Another issue worthy of noting is that *The Post* before October 2011 carried reliable information on public accountability in government operations (Banda, 2007). But after 2011, it became an ardent political mouth piece for the government (Amsterdam, 2012). Its change of political position impacted negatively on "investigative reporting of news" and in "infiltrating corruption scandals" (Phiri, 2008). Its critical role in the maturity of democracy was compromised. It didn't provide a platform to varieties of citizens to put pressure on government decision making processes (Amsterdam, 2012).

At times, tabloids although not primarily interested in politics, can play a vital political role in emerging democracies because of their typical sensational approach to reporting of news (Mapudzi, 2009; Wasserman, 2010). Therefore, although 'serious' tabloids do exist, "in Britain and United States they tend to be associated with more sensationalist, human interest driven form of news coverage" (Allan, 2004:223), while in many African countries, they tend to play a critical role in exposing scandals in the management of public funds (Ogbondah, 1994; Phiri, 2008).



On contrary, I should stress here that *The Post* during my fieldwork practised an “irresponsible form of journalism” (Amsterdam, 2012). It did not represent the citizens’ opinions truthfully as it relentlessly sided with government (Kasoma, 1996). For example, many respondents discredited the tabloid as only preoccupied with making profits (Amsterdam, 2012). Taking the issue of making money by tabloids even further, McManus (1994) makes an argument that it is not only an assumption that tabloids put the profit interests first than the public interest but a reality that exists in practice. He further adds that there is sufficient evidence to prove that from studies conducted on tabloid journalists and their owners (Deuze, 2005). Similarly, Wasserman (2010) and Mapudzi (2009) explain that check-book journalism is very common among many tabloids in Africa which often take advantage of the poor and the vulnerable by paying them for news (Ongowo, 2011).

On another issue, there are scholars who claim that in recent years, tabloid journalism has become increasingly difficult to classify (Deuze, 2005). Other scholars argue that the on-going blurring of boundaries between information and entertainment has generally been attributed to market forces, and commercialization of media content (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992). Concerns about infotainment have been raised by scholars and professionals alike throughout elective democracies with shared histories of journalism professionalization (Bird, 1990). For example, Zoonen (1998) identify the tabloid as the prime example of a popular medium where one cannot draw a meaningful distinction between ‘information’ and ‘entertainment’. These arguments by Western scholars are true with regard to African tabloids which tend to combine entertainment with investigation reports (Ongowo, 2011; Ocitti, 1999). Even in news content, at times the discourse in broadsheet and in tabloids tends to be largely similar in many African countries (Ogbondah, 1994). Moreover, some journalists working for tabloids also tend to be the same (kind of) people who work for mainstream newspapers (Wasserman, 2008).

Therefore, for an operational definition of tabloid, studies by Zoonen (1998) and Sparks (2000) show a consensus within and about tabloid journalism. For example, Sparks (2000:14-15) in particular defines tabloid as an infotainment field for print media typified by a

concentration on private life of individuals in terms of scandal, sports and entertainment. But acknowledges that the tabloids exist in several genres and there are considerable varieties in the tabloid press in different countries (Zoonen, 1998:114). For example, in Africa's emerging democracies, many scholars see tabloids as well positioned to provide information about the general public and remind governments of their responsibilities in a sensational and dramatic fashion (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2010; Mapudzi, 2009; Phiri, 2008).

In the study undertaken by Bird of journalists working in popular genres (weekly supermarket tabloid; the *National Enquirer* in the United States), she shows that although their focus are different, tabloids are located along the same storytelling continuum and report on real people and events and their staff members are journalists (Bird, 1990). Additionally, tabloid editors, just like their colleagues elsewhere in journalism, indeed "proclaim their attachment to the professional values that define the journalistic ideal" (Rhoulfari, 2000:163).

Interestingly, as already signalled, another study by Mano (2005) through interviews with journalists working for the private *Daily Mirror* and *The Financial Gazette* of Zimbabwe, reveal that when dealing with new employees from either the government owned *The Herald* or *The Standard*, their responsibilities are that of eradicating 'entrenched habits' of writing one-sided news stories on public and private affairs since they are government controlled. But he also points out that other media institutions see no need for reorientation of new recruits from government broadsheets arguing that their 'professional training' allows for a more natural accommodation required by different news organisations. In addition, he reveals that the journalists openly acknowledged conforming to both 'subtle' and 'direct' pressures exerted on their jobs by their immediate managers, who in turn took orders from the proprietors and often saw this as a natural thing to do if one had to keep up with 'the bills' (Mano, 2005:57).

Despite the various debates on tabloid journalism, this research defines the term contextually as a media output that prioritizes news coverage in the quest to promote sales and public debate including democracy through sensational language (Wasserman, 2008).

This research has also shown that the Internet made tabloids more accessible in print and online format in Zambia further increasing sales revenues from online visitors (Adam, 2012). In fact, during fieldwork, there were more tabloids that operated online than in print format (Mwenya, 2012). Online tabloid journalism practise was more flourishing than the print format and provided alternative news coverage that was sidelined by *The Post* (Adam, 2012).

### **1.5. Internet and online press**

The Internet penetration in many African countries was very slow with Ghana being the first African country to establish local Internet service in 1994 and cited by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the 'Silicon nations' to watch in the continent in terms of connectivity and information dissemination (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000). Similarly, in discussing citizen journalism and press freedom in Africa, Banda (2010) notes that the press landscape is changing very fast in the continent because of rapid proliferation of the Internet technology triggering citizen participation in journalism and bringing new hope and new challenges requiring 'redemocratisation' on the Africa continent. In the context of Internet proliferation in Africa and within the broader debates of press freedom and factors that limit journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy, Adam (2012) argues that information technologies are opening-up citizen journalism and press freedom in Africa while exposing reporters to legal and political challenges (Banda, 2010).

In recent years, the Internet has led to the proliferation of specialised news channels in Africa with some available only online (Mwenya, 2012). Some scholars note that an individual only needs is a computer, an Internet connection, and an ability to perform some of the tricks of the trade; report what one is observing, analyse events in the meaningful way, but most of all, one just needs to be fair and tell the truth (Allan, 2004; Banda, 2010). Unfortunately, many citizens running online newspapers in many African countries lack the journalism training and skills, and besides, laws are now developing to silence critical citizens (Adam, 2012). But still, the Internet signals new forms of journalism in the African

continent and is opening up new challenges to press freedom as citizen journalists are now stretching the limits of ethical norms and disseminating information widely (Banda, 2010).

In Zambia, the period from 2001 to 2010 saw an increase in the use of the Internet among citizens from 0.1 percent in 2000 to 6.0 percent in 2010 (Internet World Stats, 2011). This was partly because of an increase among the local Internet providers and mobile phone companies (Banda, 2010). Many citizens were able to access the Internet especially through their mobile phones (Mwenya, 2012a). Since 2001, the Internet was changing the face of press freedom in Africa and was a powerful form of information dissemination to the readers (Banda, 2010). For example, *The Post* went online just before February 1996 further widening its accessibility by the readers and made it easier to disseminate information rapidly (African Media Barometer, 2009).

In discussing press freedom and factors that limit journalists' role within democracy, Banda (2010:10) explains that despite the Internet making it easy and quicker to send and access information by the press, it has come with its own challenges. He notes that since 2005, there has been an increase of individuals running news blogs and websites as citizen journalists working alongside institutionalised press. He points out that citizen journalists pose a major challenge to professional practice of journalism because of their limited professional experience (Banda, 2010). Similarly, other scholars claim that citizen journalists in Africa are potentially threatening political authorities who are identifying the dangers and are developing laws now affecting the institutionalised press (Mathurine, 2004). For example, the *Zambian Watchdog*, an online tabloid was cited by authorities in 2010 for contempt of court after publishing an article that was critical of the matter before the court.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>High Court Judge Gregory Phiri ordered a quick and thorough investigation to identify the author and publisher of the contemptuous and scandalous article that was circulating on *Zambian Watchdog* about Mathew Mohan murder trial. This followed an application by lawyers that were representing Mohan, Bonaventure Mutale and Likando Kalaluka who asked the court to cite the author and editor of an online publication for contempt of court. Lawyers further argued that the newspaper circulated not only scandalous materials but also totally prejudicial to the proceedings (Mundia, 2010).

Other challenges being posed by the Internet to journalism profession includes the provision of news content (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). For example, even though the Internet is making it easier and quicker for journalists to gain and disseminate information to the readers, it is also fostering bad habits of copy and paste which has consequences on the news quality (Banda, 2010). One major contributing factor is that some journalists are under too much pressure to perform their duties quickly online as they are often required to deliver on different news channels (Banda, 2010). For example, *The Post* online often had content without proper referencing and much of its international news was easily tracked from other online sources in form of cut and paste which was a challenge to press freedom (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

Even though many Western scholars argue that the Internet is slowly threatening the future of newspapers in print format and the prospects seems to be dwindling (Merrill *et al.*, 2001). Others scholars such as the study by Turow reveals that the press should not treat the Internet as a threat but as a challenge (Turow, 2009:335). He argues that the press should adjust by building online pages more attractive and make them interesting for readers. Furthermore, other scholars point out that the optimists are not worried and treat the Internet as a partner expanding potential for the press and giving extra power to be accessible in print and online formats (Merrill *et al.*, 2001:172-182).

There are other scholars on the Internet and press freedom that argue that newspapers must seriously take advantage of opportunities being created by the Internet and use them to generate revenues from readers to compensate for slow circulation and advertising growth on print side (Turow, 2009). For example, in Africa where the Internet penetration is growing rapidly, newspapers that have struggled in print format are treating the Internet as an opportunity (Karikari, 2004; Fliess & Sandeen, 2000). However, Banda (2010) notes that while the Internet penetration is now only 5.6 percent, its use is only 3.4 percent and is still a largely elitist medium. Even though press freedom through online medium is clearly a novelty for many, is still long way from becoming a 'mass' reality that can transform African societies, press freedom and democracy (Banda, 2010:16).

Moreover, critics of the threat of the Internet to newspapers discredit it as an over-hyped technology whose impact is minimal and its potential undermined by social inequality (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000). There are many doubts among many scholars as whether the Internet can eliminate the newspaper or even the book (Hiebert *et al.*, 1988:70-71). For example, in Africa, if one was to disaggregate the Internet usage across gender, class, race, and other variables, one would conclude that the Internet is a luxury and a privilege (Banda, 2010).

There are other scholars that claim that the newspapers in print format are well positioned in human affairs as preferred source of information when it comes to providing small details that put together important fabric of community life that cannot be presented on the Internet, on the radio, or even on television (Merrill *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, disputes continue to unfold regarding which websites to be taken seriously and acknowledged (Adam, 2012). For example, Banda (2010) notes that the South Africa's *M&G (Mail and Guardian)* despite having its own 'Thought Leader' forum that encourages serious debate on matters of public debate from established contributors and readers, its' focus on 'blogs, opinion, and analysis' clearly calls for attention to its credibility and seriousness.

Despite the Internet penetration being very slow in Africa, authorities are aware of its strengths and dangers within the broader context of emerging democracies (Mwenya, 2012a). For example, the online presence of *The Post* experienced many challenges (1991-2001) with regard to online regulations. In the first act of the Internet censorship in Africa, it was asked by the Government in 1996 to remove an article from its website (Amnesty International Report, 1996). I have touched on this subject in more detail in Chapter Two on *The Post*. Furthermore, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), the Government was monitoring online activities in search of dangerous information (Adam, 2012) and regulations were developing for the Internet users in Zambia, who, it seemed, were poised for long battles with the authorities (Mwenya, 2012b).

## 1.6. Regulation of the press

In Africa, the regulations on the press heavily influence and impinge upon the freedom of many media institutions and constrain journalistic performance (Berger, 2007). The legal and institutional framework impacts negatively upon the media in their contribution to greater public finance transparency and accountability (Banda, 2007). However, even though the media operate in a tangled web of regulatory restrictions, there is still room for robust investigative journalism as I have demonstrated in Chapter Four on muckraking journalism (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007).

The questions of 'law and order' are central to many of the news media discourses around the world and among scholars (Berger, 2007; Allan, 2004; Mathurine, 2004; Moore, 1991; Moorhouse, 1964). For example, *The Post* was often a victim of regulations by the government (Phiri, 2008). Authorities regulated the tabloid through provision of various legal registrations and often threatened its critical 'news-output' with deregistration (Hamasaka, 2008). According to Banda (2007), the heavily regulated press loses its bite as a watchdog due to political pressures when dealing with issues that affect authorities and citizens.

Moreover, the heavily regulated press have limited power to influence and sway the government even in a democracy (Amsterdam, 2012). Generally, any press to survive and thrive in any political system, it must not be regarded as a dangerous and revolutionary platform by authorities, but must occupy some kind of middle ground between revolutionary and subservience (Boyce & Curran, 1978:20). Unfortunately in many African countries, even occupying the middle ground is not often tolerated except being sympathetic to government and in total support of its policies while remaining less critical (Lungu, 1986).

In Zambia, the government authorities regulated the press through partisan allocation of commercial adverts, packing public media regulatory boards with government supporters, and provision of financial contracts to assist only pro-government newspapers (Phiri,

1999).<sup>13</sup> For example, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), many respondents from *The Post* occupied government positions (Amsterdam, 2012). This was after supporting the political party (Patriotic Front) that later formed the Government. I have touched on this subject in detail in Chapters Five and Six. Critically, the government appointed *The Post* journalists to support its interests (Amsterdam, 2012).

Talking of *The Post*, it was also regulated through libel, which is generally defined within the press context as printed words in any form containing allegations, defamations and malicious misrepresentation (Beger, 2007). Even though libel occasionally provided courtroom theatre and sensational front-page coverage of news, its outcome was often unpredictable (Chama, 2012). For example, in 1995, politician Michael Sata sued *The Post* for libel as Cabinet Minister after the tabloid produced defamatory articles and mocking cartoons. He contended that the articles in the *Weekly Post* editions of 22 to 28 May 1992, 31 July to 6 August 1992, and edition 8 to 14 January 1993 were defamatory (Southern Africa Legal Information Service, 1995).

*The Post's* articles stated that he was a political survivor who survived vetting on several occasions and was a 'political prostitute' with no moral shame. It also stated that he was riotous in behaviour, heartless in razing of houses and in the firing of striking workers, corrupt in awarding contracts to associates, and outrageous and intolerant in his behaviour. It referred the matter to the Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate corruption practices, and to the police to investigate aggressive behaviour for beating up a fellow minister in the

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<sup>13</sup> The Government was the biggest advertiser in the country and often used its power over the placement of advertising to favour state-owned over private-owned media. This was particularly heightened in April 2009 when the Minister of Communication and Transport, Dora Siliya, was brought before a tribunal to investigate her conduct with regard to the awarding of a tender. Due to what the government officials considered negative reporting by *The Post*, it directed government departments not to advertise with the newspaper. It was an unwritten rule: If there was a 'hot' issue and government did not like what was published in the private media, it punished that publication or broadcaster by withholding advertising. The Government was also known to put pressure on other advertisers, implying that if they wanted to be awarded tenders, were not supposed to advertise in *The Post*. The Zambia Public Procurement Authority which awarded government tenders had procurement regulations that required all Government tenders to be advertised in both the private and the state media. But a lot of advertisements in *The Post* perceived to be from the Government were in fact paid for by donors (African Media Barometer, 2009:42-43).



National Assembly motel bar room after provocative and abusive language (Southern Africa Legal Information Service, 1995).

Furthermore, in January 1993, *The Post* published two articles together with a cartoon that he diverted a government grant worth millions of United States dollars meant for local authorities' salary increments and arrears. In the second article, the tabloid urged President Frederick Chiluba to fire him from his ministerial position arguing he was petty and corrupt. It even depicted a cartoon of a large snake with a human head pinned down by a prong on which was inscribed '1.6 billion' in reference to his nickname as 'King Cobra' (Southern Africa Legal Information Service, 1995).

In response, the accused asked for an injunction to prevent *The Post* from repeating the alleged libels. But the tabloid argued that the news stories constituted fair comments on matters of public interest. In fact, Article 20 (2) of the Constitution of Zambia of 1991 provided that no law was to be made that derogated from the freedom of the press (Chanda, 1998). Furthermore, the Defamation Act permitted a reasonable margin of misstatement of facts on the defence of fair comment (Berger, 2007). Therefore, *The Post* contended that the burden of proof allowed the press to subject public officials to criticism and scrutiny (Chanda, 1998).

Generally, in a democracy, it is important for elected government officials to be open for criticism (Berger, 2007). Moreover, Makungu (2004) argues that the threat of civil actions for defamation scares journalists and prevents them from freely discussing the matters of public interest. Civil actions against defamation suppresses freedom of expression (Chanda, 1998). In addition, Chama (2012) argues that public officials offer themselves to public scrutiny. Therefore, in the Defamation Act, even if the truth of all allegations is not established, libel could be regarded as fair comment on the conduct of a public official (Chanda, 1998). But the problem is in striking the balance between press freedom and the right to reputation (Makungu, 2004).

For example, the media in Kenya was critical in sensitizing the population within multiparty politics on the virtues of democratic systems and tended to be critical of mismanagement of public funds by government authorities (Ongowo, 2011). At times the media acted against the wishes of the government of the day and taught the population on what it meant to belong to different parties in the same country and on the significance of the individual's right to vote (Ochilo, 1993:25). However, in Zambia, authorities tended to be jittery towards the press whenever issues of poor financial accountabilities in public institutions were exposed (Phiri, 2008).

In one incident, *The Post* in 1996 was banned by the government for revealing plans to hold the referendum to change the Constitution and general elections the same year (Amnesty International Report, 1996). Again in 2008, the tabloid was cited for libel after calling former President Frederick Chiluba a thief, arguing that the former leader could not differentiate between public funds and private funds (Phiri, 2008).

Even though, *The Post* often suffered many libel charges (1991-2011), each libel that went to court was an elaborate gamble (Chama, 2012). Oftentimes libel is hideously complex in volume, and too protracted in length (Berger, 2007). Since libel depends much on court interpretations, it is better to settle grievances outside the courtroom due to its uncertain outcome and jury tendencies to award high damages (Manvell, 1966). Besides, in many African countries, media institutions tend to be slapped with heavy libel charges with the core purpose of forcing them to close-down (Mwenya, 2012b).

On another note, contempt of court was another law that often prevented *The Post* from reporting on matters that were before the court (Makungu, 2004). It is based on the premise that juries might be swayed by what they read in newspapers even though common sense dictate that they are supposed to have sufficient knowledge to decide cases based on evidence before the court and not from newspapers (Curran, 1978:78). Before 2011, *The Post* journalists were regularly arrested and interrogated for contempt of court (Chilombo *et al.*, 2007). For example, in 2009 during the court case of former President Frederick Chiluba,

the tabloid was cited for contempt of court after accusing him of being a thief despite being acquitted of all the theft charges of abuse of public funds (Ngilazi, 2009).<sup>14</sup>

*The Post* was also regulated on matters of state security, on using language that incited mutiny, on sedition, on publication of false news, and on reporting general elections (Chirwa, 1996). Talking of the general elections, the tabloid tended to often predict the correct outcome sensationally (Phiri, 2008). For example, on September 21, 2011, *The Post* correctly predicted the outcome of the elections based on its own statistics and run a front page headline that opposition leader Michael Sata was headed for victory which turned out to be true (Voice of America, 2011).

Despite *The Post's* predictions, there were laws and guidelines in Zambia that governed elections and journalists were obliged to report professionally within the law (Banda, 1997). For example, an editor who publishes a deliberate lie about a party leader in order to bias the electorate against him deserves to be punished (Banda, 1997; Curran, 1978). In the case of *The Post*, in 2011, it started speculating the election results in favour of Michael Sata even before the official counting was finally concluded. Generally, sensational news and pictures can have serious implication on democracy especially in fragile poor countries in terms of peace and stability (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000). Even though one function of the press in democracy is to provide space where discussion and differences in political debate can be expressed, the press can also be a platform that can trigger war and anarchy

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<sup>14</sup> President Frederick Chiluba was acquitted of all charges including stealing public funds on August 17, 2009. Magistrate Jones Chinyama argued that the prosecution team failed to prove the case beyond reasonable doubt against Chiluba who ruled the country from 1991 to 2001. In 2007, British Judge Peter Smith ordered Chiluba to pay US\$58 million to the country's Treasury to compensate for money suspected to have been stolen while in office. The ruling was made in Britain after Zambian officials filed a civil case hoping to recover properties and other assets owned by Chiluba and his associates in Britain and other European countries. Prior to the acquittal, *The Post* run contemptuous articles and editorials on the case (Ngilazi, 2009). The newspaper carried stories of 'Chiluba-is-a-thief' relentlessly (Phiri, 2008) and continued even after the acquittal. For example, on February 8, 2010 the newspaper carried an editorial libelling 'Chiluba a thief pushing his luck too far' that "one doesn't need a lawyer to represent him to prove that Chiluba is a thief. All they need is simply the evidence. And it is there in abundance" (The Post, 2010a). *The Post* on June 9, 2010 carried another story that 'Ndola residents boo, Chiluba calling him a thief, (Chaponda, 2010).

(Chama, 2012). However, newspapers are well positioned in democracy as platforms for “rational-critical public debate of political issues” (Tunney, 2007:3). Unfortunately, this is not the case in many African countries where they are regularly suppressed (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). Some scholars stress that in Africa’s democracy, actions of the government, which is only a trustee of the collective will and power of the people, are supposed to be regulated by the force of public opinion (Ogbondah, 1994). Other scholars point out that the press is the most appropriate medium for gauging and reflecting public opinion (Ochilo, 1993:29).

*The Post* was also regulated through injunctions (Chirwa, 1996). In fact, injunctions are court orders which affected the tabloid regularly since 1991 (Chanda, 1998). For example, in September 2011, High Court Judge Jane Kabuka granted the tabloid an injunction to restrain it from publishing of speculative stories on the results of the 2011 general elections prior to the Electoral Commission of Zambia’s official verification and announcements. An injunction is a restraining order that is used by authorities through the judge against forthcoming publications (Chanda, 1998). Usually this happens if it is suggested that a forthcoming article is based on confidential information, copyright document, or passes comment on pending litigation. Critics argue that court orders provoke bad journalism because whoever decide to publish a contentious story hesitate to ask for comments prior publication for fear of any forewarning that might prompt a restraining order (Berger, 2007).

Even though injunctions heavily impact negatively on press freedom in Africa, there are still other factors that limit journalists’ role in their professional practice within democracy. For example, the press is crucial in establishing open, democratic and stable societies (Kasoma, 1996), but this resides in the press’s ability to expose and criticise bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, abuse of power and the violation of human rights (Ogbondah, 1994). It involves journalists adopting the position that the mass media constitutes the institutional framework for exercising a regular scrutiny on the activities of the government to see how performance matches promise or how programmes are being implemented (Ochilo, 1993:28).

Other related regulations that affected *The Post* were on matters of privacy (Chama, 2012). As already noted in my earlier discussions, the tabloid often exposed citizens' private affairs in the name of public interest (Phiri, 2008). In scholarly discussions, privacy and the media attract heated debate, even though some things people do in the privacy of their homes deserve some level of secrecy and veil of tolerance, but again those who seek public support must accept that the public may want to know some aspects of their private lives (Rozenberg, 2004). For example, the public may want to know that a priest who preaches sermons against adultery is actually having an affair with another man's wife. In many cases, the press might be justified to expose the priest but only if he or she preaches that sort of sermon (Curran, 1978:219-220). However, this level of freedom is difficult to achieve in many African countries because of vague legal guidelines on the boundaries between privacy and public affairs (Chama, 2012; Berger, 2007; Ogbondah, 1994)

Generally, many questions are raised about state regulations of the news media (Kasoma, 1997a; Allan, 2004). Scholarly debate on regulation of the news media attracts different opinions (Berger, 2007). For example, some regulations make it difficult for judges to convict journalists because of vague guidelines (Chanda, 1998). At times prosecutions of regulations offenders tend to be counter-productive as circulation of many newspapers increases when their journalists are prosecuted (Curran, 1978). However, in many African countries, this can only happen if such newspapers are permitted to continue publishing during prosecution of their journalists (Chama, 2012). Very often, prosecutions of critical journalists work in tandem with the closure of their publications (Federation of African Journalists, 2010). Some scholars point out that generally, journalists facing prosecution thirst for valuable publicity generated by a public trial in a court of justice (Kalaluka, 2010). For example, *The Post* used sensational headlines when its journalists were facing prosecution (Chama, 2012). During the trial of its journalist Chansa Kabwela in 2009 who was facing charges of distributing pornographic pictures and corrupting public morals, the tabloid used many legal experts in its news coverage on the merits of the case. It even

published editorials mocking a case as a 'comedy of errors.' In the end, its owner and editor in chief was also arrested and charged for contempt of court (Ndulo, 2009).<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, even though there are many factors that negatively impact on press freedom and on journalists' professional practice within democracy, the media in many African countries are heavily subjected to heavy regulations (Ocitti, 1999). Even though there are some exceptions in some countries where some form of press freedom exists, it is important however to note that the kind of regulations as already noted in my early discussions, is not in any way comparable with what is known to exist in Western countries (Ochilo, 1993:23).

On another level of discussion, the nature of news presented to the general public within democracy also impacts on press freedom and on democracy (Kasoma, 1996). Even though news is an object of policy formation and is treated as an agent of representative democracy (Allan, 2004), in Africa, the news value is varied due to great diversity within the continent (Ogbondah, 1994). In effect, some media institutions in Africa use the Western news value

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<sup>15</sup> *The Post* cited Muna Ndulo, Professor of Law at the Cornell Law School and Director of the Institute for African Development in the United States who argued that, since 1857 when the first obscenity laws were passed in Britain, the classic definition of criminal obscenity has always been "if it tends to deprave and corrupt morals" stated in 1868 by John Coleridge. Perhaps the most celebrated case ever brought under the obscene publications Act in the Britain was the 1960 prosecution of Penguin books for the posthumous publication of D.H. Lawrence book *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The jury acquitted Penguin of all charges. It was established in that case that the objective of obscenity legislation is the protection of morals. The average person in Zambia, while no doubt being shocked and disgusted by the picture, would not regard the publication of pictures of a woman giving birth in order to expose the plight of ordinary people during a national strike by medical personnel as being prurient to corrupt morals. Instead, the pictures should lead to outrage and anger at those who were not making maximum efforts to end the strike. The context and manner in which they were distributed leaves no doubt in one's mind that the pictures were intended to make those in authority realise the serious impact of the medical strike and to bring about action to end the strike. No doubt other situations could have been used but the choice of a maternity case was probably intended to touch the humanity in all of us and clearly succeeded in that objective: As Shakespeare writes in the *Comedy of Errors*, "Every why hath a wherefore". The wherefore was to show the horrible impact of the medical strike which justifies the why. The source of the materials distributed eliminates any concerns relating to privacy issues and that would be for the woman in the picture to prosecute. Pictures of a woman giving birth no doubt are inappropriate and the sight should make many cringe but cannot be erotic and do not deal with sex at all. No doubt they are contrary to African tradition but that is not the test for obscenity or what the Obscene Offences Act is designed to deal with (Ndulo, 2009).

yardstick of proximity, conflict, unusual events, personality and education to determine what to deal with (Kasoma, 1996). At the same time the media are increasingly used by government as channels for the propagation of ideological standpoint on particular matters and to disseminate the ruling party matters (Ochilo, 1993:25).

Therefore, if news is vital for democracy, then regulations can either harm or enhance it and thus democracy (Ogbonda, 1994). For example, from 1991 to 2011, *The Post* campaigned for self-regulation relentlessly (Kuwema, 2011a). But authorities resisted arguing that the press was unable to regulate itself because of conflict of interests which could undermine democracy (Phiri, 1999). Besides, self-regulation comes with a deep sense of responsibility which cannot merely be entrusted with journalists (Kasoma, 1996).

For example, Ogbondah (1994) claims that African leaders argue that given the continent's fragile position in the global economic system, a colonial legacy and the instability of newly independent African countries, a free press in the Western sense can too easily lead to chaos and failure by the government to function properly (Kasoma, 1996). He further argues that leaders thus stress that regulations are necessary for national development and political stability (Ogbondah, 1994:3).

Even though my argument is that heavy regulations are not the panacea for political stability, I strongly believe that the press while need to be regulated, are also vital instruments that could ensure accountability of the government leaders to the governed and are one of the essential ingredients in social and political development (Chama, 2012). But the overall question is as to whether journalists are professional enough to take full responsibility for their actions and whether they are capable of driving the political agenda for the citizens? For example, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), *The Post* was not reporting news fairly due to political inclinations (Amsterdam, 2012). Therefore, the concept of news output brings us to further discussion on the professional practice of journalism within an emerging democracy (Makungu, 2004; Phiri, 1999).

### 1.7. Professional practice of the press

*The Post* was often at the centre of debate regarding its professional behaviour (Phiri, 1999). It was regularly criticised for exhibiting unprofessional tendencies in news coverage including its use of 'abusive' language to put its message across (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Kasoma (1997a) castigates the tabloid's conduct for calling President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) a scoundrel, arguing that there should be a clear distinction between being critical of someone and actually insulting the person. But the same newspaper is also credited for exposing abuse of public funds and contributing to the democratic discourses (Banda, 2007).

Different critical positions on *The Post's* professional conduct point to the uncertainties on what actually constitutes the central professional skill of journalists (Kasoma, 1995; McQuail, 1994). Sociologist Max Weber (1948) views a journalist as belonging to "a sort of pariah caste" and just like the artist lacking a fixed social classification. Similarly, Schudson (1978) characterises journalism as "un-insulated profession" lacking clear boundaries. Generally, among most members of professions, the appropriate wider social role they perform is usually taken care of by institutions leaving members to concentrate on the practice of their skills, but this is not the case in journalism due to its internal diversity (McQuail, 1994). The writing of Habermas (1989, 1992) as cited by Allan (2004) shows that there are many critical debates on the professional practice of journalism when it comes to news culture. "Attention focuses on the decisive role the news media play in establishing a discursive space, one framed by state and economic domains on either side, for public deliberations over social issues" (Allan, 2004:3).

Even though there is a certain level of truth from the earlier debates on what constitutes the professional skill of journalists, Ochilo (1993) cautions that political interference by the ruling elites on journalism professionals have reduced the effective functional roles in many African countries as fourth estate acting on behalf of the majority citizens who do not belong to the ruling elites. He explains that in providing solutions to the professional role of journalists in



democracy, the media should reclaim its rightful place to be taken seriously. Other scholars note that journalists should be seen to be professionally serving the ends of democracy effectively and not copying the Western form of journalism which has no regard to African values and ethics (Kasoma, 1996).

During my fieldwork (2011-2012), the professional practice of *The Post* was a matter of political controversy and public concern (Chama, 2012). Scholarly debates show that the tabloid's quality of information was poor and damaged democracy (Phiri, 1999). Very often the general complaint against journalists is the tendency to distort information (Manvell, 1966:32) despite the common belief that journalists serve the public (Kasoma, 1996: 95). Other common assumptions are that journalists are supposed to exhibit maximum professionalism in news gathering and reporting; the notion with complex challenges (Ocitti, 1999).<sup>16</sup> However, some scholars claim that in many African countries, the media is slowly abandoning this noble objective of 'serving the people' for the selfish cause of 'serving self' and instead of becoming a 'mean to an end', African journalism is becoming an end in itself (Kasoma, 1996). The professional positioning of journalism practice as an end in itself impacts on press freedom negatively. It also limits journalists' freedom to serve the general public truthfully and objectively as news becomes a means to achieve selfish political gains by owners of media institutions (Mano, 2005).

On the contrary, the general understanding of professional practice of journalism is rooted in objectivity in news genre as a central strategic ritual which, although under fire, is still a

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<sup>16</sup> The peripheral public are 'represented' by media staff whose professional self-esteem rests on the claim that they serve society. This argument needs to be viewed critically. The first issue of contention is the degree to which journalists' claims to autonomy recorded in academic surveys are true. To some degree, journalists' sense of independence may stem from their internalisation of the norms of their employing organisations. They can feel autonomous because they do what is expected from them without being told what to do. The second issue is the extent to which journalists are really independent of the hierarchy of power in society as a consequence of their commitment to professional values. A powerful assault on the professionalization of journalism has been mounted by critics who argue that it is based on a stunted version of objectivity a 'strategic ritual' whose real purpose is to obviate the need to evaluate what is true, avoid causing offence to the powerful and facilitate the meeting of deadlines; that it legitimates reliance on a narrow oligarchy of sources; and results in pro-establishment and trivialising forms of journalism (Curran, 2002:154-155).

cornerstone of the profession (Biressi & Nunn, 2008:254).<sup>17</sup> Yet, objectivity as a central professional practice is a contentious issue (Mano, 2005). The fact is that even though not all the press institutions are expected by readers to provide objective information, objectivity and related standards of factuality are far from unanimously regarded possible to achieve (McQuail, 1994:148). 'Objectivity' is a professional ideal and in other words, impartiality demand journalists that they distinguish 'facts' from 'values' if their respective newspaper is to be recognised as a free arbiter of truth. But such a commitment to 'value-free' reporting has frequent implication in professional terms (Allan, 2004:22). However, even though objectivity is a necessity in journalism practice, in many African countries, media institutions very often exist at the mercy of political authorities who tend to heavily censor news content no matter how objectively written which is another limitation on press freedom within democracy (Ogbondah, 1994). Despite the various scholarly debates, there are many difficulties that surround the attainment of objectivity within media institutions (Mano, 2005). But still, in Africa, the media have a crucial role to play in the continent's pursuit of political and economic justice at both national and international level despite political and legal challenges which are critical for the maturity of democracy (Ochilo, 1993).

But still, in so far as we aim to understand the professional practice of journalism, we cannot get along without embracing the value of objectivity (Lichtenberg, 1990). It is the pinnacle of the professional ideology of journalists and it involves the exercise of a practical craft which delivers required information characterised by a high degree of objectivity with key marks of obsessive of facts and neutrality of attitude (Tuchman, 1978). Objectivity also deals with attitude attached to the task of information collection, processing, and dissemination. It involves adopting a position of detachment and neutrality from the object of reporting (McQuail, 1994). Even though objectivity is valuable and a pinnacle of journalism profession, in many African countries, its key marks are difficult to realise because of the fragile political environment where journalists are often arrested and intimidated if they present news critical of authorities no matter how objective the news might be written (Lungu, 1986). Moreover,

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<sup>17</sup> Generally, the news genre incorporates a stance that stresses the role of the journalist as an independent observer, gathering information to be presented to the audience as fact (Bird, 2008).

the collection and procession of information with the aim of presenting objective news is also undermined by archaic media laws (Leepile, 1996). In fact, political dynamics as well that surrounds the media institutions impacts negatively on press freedom and on journalists' adherence to objectivity (Phiri, 1999).

Objectivity, as a professional requirement of *The Post*, was often breached through over-zealousness in seeking to make a scoop as often happened when there was treatment of some likely political happening as if it had already occurred (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). I should acknowledge here that, very often, journalists worked under pressure to meet dead-lines but sometimes carelessness and laziness in news gathering came into play and affected objectivity (Phiri, 1999). For example, in a study of a tabloid *Weekly Citizen* and a quality *Sunday Nation*, Ongowo (2011) notes that newspapers in Kenya push the limits of journalism professional practice by employing some questionable tactics of investigative reporting including covert surveillance or sting operations during which they hide their identities, invade the privacy of individuals, buy information, illegally hack telephones and computers and even tape people without consent. Therefore, in as far as authorities are blamed for undermining democracy (Chama, 2012) journalists too, should equally look at themselves with a sense of self-reflection of their activities within emerging democracy to make progress (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012).

On another issue, the professional practice of journalism is also understood through a cultural context which plays a critical role (Kasoma, 1996). For example, if the culture of the newspaper is to make money, often the professional practice is oriented towards sales and profit margins (Conboy, 2002:66). Some scholars argue that journalists act unprofessionally when they serve only their own interests in making money within democracy as they reap great profit by sensationalising news and running misleading headlines (McManus, 1994). Other scholars further claim that due to intense competition in the press industry, professional practice is mainly understood through winning and keeping readers while employing different strategies and tactics ranging from frightening to annoying the readers (Mapudzi, 2009).

For example, as already noted in the earlier discussions, *The Post's* professional practice was often a matter of public debate (Kasoma, 1997a). During my fieldwork (2011-2012), it was accused of prioritising profits by some of my respondents at the expense of public interest news (Amsterdam, 2012). Scholarly debates show that commercial interests make many newspapers to see news as a commodity to be sold to the readers (McManus, 1994). The readers as consumers are then purchased by the advertisers (Banda, 2004). However, because of good financial base, some privately owned newspapers in some African countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria or even Ghana are fairly autonomous in their editorial policy (Karikari, 2004).

Therefore, since my study was on the tabloid within an emerging democracy, it was vital to explore the social-political and legal environment of Zambia. The purpose of doing this was to shed light on the dynamics that impacted on press freedom and on journalism practice through *The Post*, which was at the centre of my study.

#### **1.8. Press in Zambia: Problem setting**

There was a limited amount of literature that examined independent tabloids in Zambia to help me understand press freedom and the factors that hindered journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2004; Chirwa, 1996; Lungu, 1986). Generally, newspapers were polarised between government-owned and private-owned (Banda, 2004). Journalists often reported accurately but not necessarily fairly as stories usually had a specific slant when it came to politics (Phiri, 1999). For example, government-owned newspapers often supported government while privately owned newspapers pushed the agenda of opposition political parties (Kasoma, 1997a). Newspapers used information selectively to highlight certain aspects that supported their agenda (Makungu, 2004). Critics argued that the problem started in the political culture of newsrooms. Editors knew what kind of stories they wanted even before reporters' interviewed sources and picked angles that fitted their agenda (African Media Barometer, 2009:62).

Government-owned newspapers were very dominant and were used by ruling politicians to peddle hate propaganda against perceived opponents (Phiri, 1999).<sup>18</sup> Journalists working for the government-owned newspapers were often reshuffled and complained of harassment by officials (Lungu, 1986). Editors were compelled to advance the ruling political party's position on public affairs (Phiri, 1999:57-59). Generally, government-owned newspapers did not carry stories of corruption but were more comfortable exposing opposition leaders (Mathurine, 2004).

For example, during the general elections in 1996, government-owned newspapers were biased towards the ruling political party as shown in the tone of news, in the physical distribution of texts, photographs, and advertisements (Banda, 1997). In short, government-owned newspapers were not regarded as credible sources of information by informed readers (Phiri, 1999). Therefore, democratic participation through government-owned newspapers was impossible as criticism of government operations was limited (Lungu, 1986). Unless the government-owned newspapers were to return to the principle of serving the citizens, it was easy to lose the claim of being a Fourth Estate (Kasoma, 1996).

Privately-owned newspapers too were counter-hegemonic and always resisted government influence (Makungu, 2004). Relentlessly, they criticised government and its policies (Banda, 2007). For example, before 2011, *The Post* vibrantly criticised government authorities (Chama, 2012). But after 2011, the tabloid supported government interests. I have touched on this political positioning issue in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

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<sup>18</sup>Editorial independence of the Government-owned *Times of Zambia* and *Zambia Daily Mail* newspapers was not legally protected from political interference, and such interference existed (Africa Media Barometer, 2009:35-36). Boards of both newspapers were answerable to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services. Chief Executive Officers were appointed by the President of Zambia. Board selection process itself was not transparent and it was not made known publicly how the members were chosen. Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services sat on the boards appointed by the party in power which had a great say when it came to the content of the newspapers. Routinely, they were used by the ruling party to react to criticism from political opponents. If articles that could be construed as anti-government appeared, senior editorial staffs were subjected to pressure, threats and directives from ministry officials. Such directives included being forced to publish pro-government articles which were not properly sourced and often libellous. Perhaps if the boards of these newspapers were independently and transparently appointed, they would have had more editorial independence (Phiri, 1999).

Generally, private-owned newspapers excessively used unnamed sources in news genre (Phiri, 1999). As with regard to the use of sources, typically journalistic information takes the form of quotes from sources, which journalists assemble in recognisable generic form, offering information aimed at proving the source's credibility (Biressi & Nunn, 2008:254). However, the level at which African newspapers use sources is so excessive that it often opens them to legal and political intimidations (Moyo, 2005). At times, the excessive use of unnamed sources can even be classified as 'white elephants' which in real sense are mental figments of journalists (Kasoma, 1997a).

*The Post* particularly reported news full of exaggerations and often made sensationally misleading headlines (Phiri, 1999). At times, the tabloid printed downright biased reports that were based more on the writer's emotions than reasoned opinion (Kasoma, 1997a). At other times, the tabloid was bombarded with lawsuits (Mathurine, 2004).<sup>19</sup> Overall, the legal and political situation compounded by professional practices resulted in many privately owned newspapers to close down prematurely (Makungu, 2004).<sup>20</sup> Sufficient evidence suggested that the state of privately owned newspapers was rather precarious in Zambia (Banda, 2004).<sup>21</sup> But still, as already signalled in my earlier discussions, the Internet was making it

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<sup>19</sup>Sometimes authorities were intolerant of opposing views and was the main reason why some newspapers prematurely closed down. But one also needed to acknowledge that irresponsibility in news coverage by journalists gave authorities legitimate, if not legal right for intervention (Phiri, 1999).

<sup>20</sup>Apparently, the police were empowered by law to detain citizens for two days before charging them and most detentions tended to take place during the course of investigations. Journalists were often detained in police stations while investigations took place before being charged (Mathurine, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> *Crime News* newspaper lasted only a few months due to legal and political confrontations with government authorities. In April 1995, its managing editors Steward Mwila and George Malunga were arrested after publishing an article on pornography and nudity accompanied by pictures illustrated by Zimbabwean sculpture and Kenyan political cartoonist taken from *Free Press* journal published by Media Institute of Southern Africa. Journalists argued that the article was intended to open public debate on matters of public interest (Amnesty International, 1996). Another newspaper *The Monitor* took off in 1996 but later experienced so many problems with politicians including arrests and detention of its journalists. It became bombarded with so many lawsuits leading to its closure due to lack of financial resources (Makungu, 2004:19). Other privately run newspapers that closed down since 1991 include *The Seer* which shut down due to harassments and intimidations from government authorities and political cadres. It received many threats before closing down especially when it wanted to publish a story about a sex scandal that involved the wife of President Frederick Chiluba. Another promising newspaper *The People* shut down prematurely after

possible for tabloids that were unable to survive in print format to go online (Mathurine, 2004).<sup>22</sup> The Internet, despite its own challenges, was enhancing the participation of citizens and there were many signs of positive promises that were offered by 'digital revolution' (Banda, 2010).

### 1.9. Study justification

My research was justified because of the severe crippling of privately-owned newspapers especially from 1991 to 2011 which was an unhealthy development and whose symptoms urgently needed to be addressed (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996). For example, *The Post* journalists suffered many law suits and arrests and citizens connected to the newspaper were suppressed too (Mungonge, 2007). Some scholars argue that from 1999 to 2001, it was heavily suppressed by the government for its hard-line reporting especially that it was more willing to expose the government when it stepped out of line than other newspapers (Phiri, 2008).

As an outspoken critic, it was subjected to numerous instances of interference (Mathurine, 2004:76). Its leading force behind its editorial courage was its editor in chief Fred Mmembe who was served with more than 50 lawsuits in the period from 1991 to 2011 and was the subject of a 24-hour manhunt in 2006 for defaming President Levy Mwanawasa (Yoler *et al.*,

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encountering so many problems with authorities. In 2002, its journalists were arrested and charged with defamation after publishing a story that President Levy Mwanawasa was suffering from Parkinson's disease. Journalists were also forced to disclose confidential source of information following an article and later curved in to reveal their sources to which government withdrew the charge. Other private owned newspapers which closed down included *The Today* founded in 2001 which was too critical of government operations. Many advertisers were reluctant to be associated with the newspaper. It closed down in 2003 due to lack of funding and advertising revenues (Mathurine, 2004:76-78). Moreover, other privately owned newspapers that closed down for various reasons include *The Sun*, *The Chronicle*, *The New Nation*, and *The Weekly Angel* (Banda, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Economic factors were a major reason for short life span of many privately owned newspapers. More than 200 newspaper titles were registered with Director of National Archives since 1991 but many closed down due to high cost of printing ink and low number of sales while others resorted to going online (Banda, 2004:11). Unfortunately, the Internet penetration was very slow including development of government policies (Banda, 2010; de Beer, 2009:329).

2007). *The Post* was a victim of legal and political intimidations from 1995 to 1999 when the crackdown reached its highest levels and its journalists were subjected to harassments by politicians (Chirwa, 1996). It was not the focus of this study to provide the list of all offences against the tabloid but content analysis of the newspaper editions during my fieldwork revealed many charges against the tabloid (Chama, 2012).

Prior to this study, no substantial fieldwork research discussed tabloid journalism and professional practice in emerging democracies in Africa. *The Post* made an ideal choice as the only visible and strong competitor to government owned newspapers that provided a good case study (Phiri, 1999). I explored the understanding of press freedom and factors that hindered journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy and some of the critical issues of tabloid journalism profession; including ownership, institutional pressures, political pressures, news selection, sources, and gate-keeping through personal interviewing with tabloid journalists. Another justification was that *The Post* merited this study because it played a key role in opening up the democratic space (Banda, 2007).

My study was justified looking at the way the media institutions in many African countries struggled to enjoy press freedom because of operating under authoritarian regimes which determined their survival and operations (Ochilo, 1993:25). Generally, in Africa, newspapers play an important role in the building of democracy as a political system (Phiri, 1999). Access to information, as well as opportunities to participate freely in political debates, are considered key elements of democracy (Moyo, 2005:110-111). Newspapers can play a critical role in democracy as platforms for rational and critical debates on political debates along the lines of entertaining and informing (Makungu, 2004; Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1997a). Political processes impacts on press freedom and democratic participation both positively and negatively (Ogbondah, 1994). My study on *The Post*, raised questions which had implications on press freedom and on the professional practise of tabloid journalism within emerging democracies.



In this study, I explored the understanding of press freedom and factors that hindered journalists' roles in their professional practice within emerging democracies and the political pressures that were mobilised against *The Post* since its inception in 1991, and how it performed professionally as a government watchdog. I looked at how tabloid journalists negotiated the political framework, and what could be learned from their experiences on the ground about developments in tabloid journalistic practice. I investigated how *The Post* contributed to debates about the potential of the commercial press in anti-democratic nations. I analysed strengths and limitations of *The Post* as a commercial independent tabloid, and whether there was any potential future for independent newspapers, and how press freedom could be enhanced.

My study was justified because it was the first to undertake a detailed case analysis of *The Post* and the first to undertake fieldwork analysis of tabloid journalistic practice at *The Post* in Zambia. It was also the first detailed study of the tabloid and its professional practice. It was also the first detailed study of an African tabloid that enriched debates about the role of independent tabloids in emerging democracies. My study findings as presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, provide new insights to the broader intellectual debates about the role of tabloids in developing and sustaining a democratic culture of public debate and scrutiny. My study shows the complexities that surround the media institutions within political and legal affairs and offers new insights on the on-going debate on press freedom and on tabloid journalism within emerging democracies.

#### **1.10. Conclusion**

Tabloids were slowly changing the concept and understanding of press freedom in emerging democracies in Africa (Wasserman, 2008). Many critical arguments and debates on relevance and boundaries of tabloids within democracy were complex (Mapudzi, 2009). Implicit in this study, were broader discussion on the role of the media in democracy (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Ogbondah (1994) sees the media in Africa as vital for exposing financial accountability in public institutions which has led to heavy poverty despite

heavy funding from international organisations and despite being endowed with many natural resources. Other scholars such as Kasoma (1996) advises the African media to embrace the notion of serving the poor and to avoid the selfish needs of serving their own interests.

Similarly, Curran (2002:247) notes that the press in democracy should empower citizens by enabling them to explore where their interests lie. It should support sectional group identities and assist the functioning of organisations necessary for the effective representation of group interests. It should also sustain vigilant scrutiny of the Government and centres of power (Chama, 2012). It should provide a source of protection and redress for weak and unorganised interests; and it should create the conditions for real societal agreement or compromise based on an open discussion of differences rather than a contrived consensus based on elite dominance (Phiri, 1999).

The empowering of the citizens by the media and the keeping of vigilance in the scrutiny of public institutions relates well with the analysis by Phiri (2008) on the watchdog role of the media in which they play a checkpoint role on the excesses of the government. He notes that the media are critical for the promotion of democracy and development, more so in Zambia, which has been for a long time under single party rule (Lungu, 1986).

Therefore, in this Chapter, I looked at the background information on press freedom and on factors that prevents journalists fulfilling their responsibilities in their professional practice within democracy. I analysed and defined press, press freedom, tabloid press, online press, press regulation, and professional practices. I further looked at the problem setting and study justification including questions and contributions.

The major issues that emerged in the Chapter were that the definition of the term press was not straight forward and that the differences in the definitions existed in many broader scholarly debates. The other issue addressed was on the notion of press freedom which was seen as a contentious subject and that owners' intervention made it difficult to be realised. I

also noted that the concept of tabloid was defined as a unique form of journalism practice in emerging democracies but followed general principles of journalism profession. Another issue of interest in this Chapter was that the Internet was slowly changing the media landscape and the nature of information dissemination. In fact, there was need for the press to consider seriously the challenges, threats, and opportunities that were posed by the cyberspace (Banda, 2010). Another issue was on the press regulation even though the problem was on understanding the motives and agendas. Finally, the professional practice of journalists was another issue of contention with some scholars claiming that it was defined mainly by their press institutions (Mano, 2005).

Therefore, my next Chapter presents detailed information about *The Post* and looks at its formation, its early developments, and its challenges. I also explore some of the issues that affected the tabloid in terms of government relations, professional practices, and the legal and political challenges.

## Chapter II

### *The Post of Zambia*

Therefore, this Chapter presents a historical background of *The Post* and the political circumstances that led to its formation. It argues that the founding of the tabloid emerged as a result of unbalanced coverage in the political playing field dominated by government owned media in the run up to the multiparty election in 1991. It discusses the ownership of the tabloid and its management and points out that it was initially set up as a weekly tabloid, which went daily a few months later (Mungonge, 2007). The Chapter looks at its mission statement and its editorial policy and identifies some of its professional challenges that impacted both negatively and positively on press freedom. The Chapter analyses the tabloid's sales, advertising, circulation, printing and the impact of politics. It assesses the emerging online journalism and looks at the online publication of the tabloid including its political challenges.

#### **2.0. Introduction**

Sub-Sahara Africa provides varieties of newspapers that can make very good case studies of press freedom and factors that limit journalists' responsibilities in their practice (Chama, 2012; Karikari, 2004; Phiri, 1999; Ogbondah, 1994). For example, *The Post* existed since 1991 and managed to fill the information gap in a predominantly government owned press environment (Makungu, 2004). Despite playing its watchdog role over government within democracy, it was often criticised as unprofessional in news coverage (Kasoma, 1995). It was usually a victim of harassment and intimidation mainly from the ruling government authorities (Phiri, 1999).

From 1991, there were several attempts by government to close it down, but it managed to withstand the pressure and did relatively well as compared to other tabloids (Chirwa, 1996). *The Post* was a peculiar case of an enduring publication in various times of adversity (Phiri,

1999). Through the years, the tabloid provided 'hard' and 'soft' news agenda merged with information and entertainment, and with it the privileges of scandal, gossip, celebrity and sports (Mungonge, 2007).

*The Post* operated for more than 20 years in an environment which was not very friendly for the independent press and for press freedom (Lungu, 1986). It enjoyed press freedom only for a short period of time from 1991 when the country embraced multiparty democracy (Chirwa, 1996). From 1992, President Frederick Chiluba after a promising start launched a hostile leadership against his critics betraying his earlier democratic promises (Global Journalist, 2000). *The Post* became very critical of Chiluba's dictatorial tendencies (Phiri, 1999). In retaliation, Chiluba used the government and especially the judiciary and security wings to water down its reporting through arrests and detention of its journalists (Chirwa, 1996).

In fact, the period from 1991 to 2001 was very fragile for press freedom and journalists were always intimidated, arrested and often imprisonment (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). After President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001), President Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008) and President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) all subjected the tabloid to hostile treatment (Chama, 2012). However, some of its problems were not merely because of government intolerance with opposing views often carried by the tabloid; but sometimes due to its poor professional practices, which usually conspired with legal and political challenges and led to a chain of harassment and intimidation (Phiri, 1999). During my fieldwork, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that some of the tabloid's professional practices were very questionable (Amsterdam, 2012). Nonetheless, despite its own pitfalls, it helped to open up the democratic space about democratic participation (Banda, 2007). In fact, *The Post's* merging of information and entertainment into an 'infotainment' muddle made it flourish at the expense of proper reporting (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

## 2.1. Background information

Even though the level of press freedom was minimal from 1991 when *The Post* was founded, there were other factors that impacted on the professional practice of journalists within democracy (Chirwa, 1996). For example, *The Post* operated in an environment dominated by government-controlled print and broadcast media (Makungu, 2004). But despite the powerful government presence, it asserted itself relatively well (Mathurine, 2004:74). For example, in 1991 when labour unionist Frederick Chiluba defeated President Kenneth Kaunda, ending his 37-year tenure, the tabloid was instrumental as a major oppositional publication (Global Journalist, 2000). The same tabloid ensured the failure of Chiluba's attempts to change the Constitution to extend his tenure in 2001 (Mathurine, 2004).

The predominantly government controlled media impacted negatively on press freedom and on democracy as authorities always threatened the independent publication with closure and journalists from government publications were expected to promote ruling authorities' interests (Phiri, 1999; Lungu, 1986). During my fieldwork, there were three major leading daily newspapers in the country namely *The Post*, *Zambia Daily Mail* and *Times of Zambia* and all had an online presence (African Media Barometer, 2009).

Just to provide a brief overview, *Zambia Daily Mail* began as an independently owned newspaper in 1948 called *Central African Post* (Lungu, 1986:390). It was published by Scott and Astor (Mungonge, 2007) as a political platform for Africans who were fighting for independence (Lungu, 1986). It was bought by the government in 1964 just after independence to champion its political agenda. It changed its name to *Central African Mail*, and then to *Zambia Mail* and finally in 1972 it became *Zambia Daily Mail* (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, *Times of Zambia* began as an independent owned newspaper in 1943 as *Northern News*. It was published by Lonrho as a political mouthpiece for early British settlers (Mungonge, 2007). It changed its ownership in 1963 and in 1964 due to the country's

political changes led *Northern News* to change its name to *Times of Zambia* and to adopt a pro-African political stance (Lungu 1986).

In 1983, the state nationalised all parastatal companies and these two daily newspapers were transformed into government ownership (Mungonge, 2007). Looking at my literature review in the previous Chapter, even though a newspaper has a public responsibility to express views of those running it, the government owned newspapers enabled the government under United National Independent Party to remain in power for 27 years which it could not have secured on the basis of its record, its programme or its character (Makungu, 2004).

After 1964 when the country became independent from British colonial rule, press freedom was highly compromised and political interference was one of the factors that prevented journalists fulfilling their responsibilities within the political context (Mushota, 1989). For example, from 1964 to 1990, the period was one of the most turbulent for the press (Lungu, 1986). Divergent views of ordinary citizens irrespective of whether these views were constructive or otherwise were manipulated and blacked out by government (Mushota, 1989:42). Such measures were intended for the press to gradually degenerate into uncritical coverage of politicians and political statements (Moore, 1991).

Attempts by different individuals and groups trying to establish an independent press failed miserably (Kasoma, 1986). For example, the *National Mirror* an independent newspaper founded in 1970 partly survived because of being owned and supported by church groups (Lungu, 1986). Another independent tabloid the *Sunday Post*, officially registered on August 31, 1982, published only for five months before it was forced to close down (Mungonge, 2007). Same day that the first 12 page edition came out, the newspaper showed early signs of trouble. In its second edition, it was forced to reduce its page sizes to eight because of powerful political forces which withdraw newsprint from *Printpak* the printers of the newspaper (Mungonge, 2007). Unfortunately, the last edition was dated January 16, 1983, and never bade farewell to its readers. Press freedom was heavily suppressed and

journalists' professional practice was at the mercy of the ruling authorities within a one-party form of government (Lungu, 1986). In 1990, multiparty politics were introduced by government accompanied by an open market-driven economy. But the lack of balanced political views in the government owned media during the multi-party election campaign from 1990 to 1991 led to the formation of *The Post* (Mungonge, 2007:36).

## **2.2.     *The Post***

*The Post* was a market-leading privately owned tabloid founded in 1991 (Mungonge, 2007). It was a good case to investigate press freedom and journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy because it did relatively well since its inception (Phiri, 1999). Besides, it was the only tabloid that was widely distributed and that offered much more balanced news coverage as compared to government owned newspapers (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). It also presented a story of an enduring publication in times of changing political and social adversity, and contributed relatively well to the development of democracy (Phiri, 1999:65).

An idea of setting up a tabloid was initiated by Matsauso Phiri a media consultant (Mungonge, 2007; Taylor, 2006). The initiative was intended to counteract government political propaganda and fill the gap in information from 1990 to 1991 multiparty campaign. After broad consultations with two other veteran journalists John Mukela and Michael Hall, they agreed to set up the newspaper to commence as the *Weekly Post* (Mungonge, 2007:35).

But none of the three journalists had any business background and experience to ensure that the tabloid was financially viable (Mungonge, 2007). They later linked up with Fred Mmembe who wanted a career change and be able to contribute towards the changing political environment. He thought the newspaper business was the best place to do this as compared to what he called a routine accounting and auditing job at KPMG an international auditing firm that was based in Lusaka. He volunteered to assist by drawing up the business



plan and it was at that point that he became the fourth co-founder of the project with a mission of making the tabloid financially sound. The four became initial founding members who contributed towards the success of the tabloid (Mungonge, 2007:38).

The four decided to have a Managing Editor to take up full responsibility of the editorial side and a Managing Director to run the business side. Fred Mmembe was requested to be the Managing Director and to mobilise shareholders while Michael Hall took the responsibility as Managing Editor. Matsauso Phiri became the Special Projects Editor and acted as Deputy Managing Director and worked on most investigative pieces of stories (Mungonge, 2007:26).

*The Post* was launched with the capital of about US\$25.000 after approaching few investors who included Anderson Mazoka, Theo Bull, Simon Zucas, Enock Kavindele, Bodwin Nkumbula and Author Wina (Mwinga, 2011). Initial journalists were Jowie Mwinga, Chris Chitanda, and Dinga Chirwa while Robby Makayi was first editor. Then Kwalayela Mann Banda and Priscalina Phiri joined as sub-editors. Journalists' embraced tabloid-driven ethos which caused shock among the readers, one where truth tends to be reduced to what you can get away with (Mungonge, 2007). *The Post* with only six Macintosh computers, a laser printer, a scanner and some furniture including a second hand van started the business. Operation office was in a rented house in Jesmondine in Lusaka East next to Marshland, a University of Zambia village. Initial founders came up with the slogan that "the paper that digs deeper" after trying dummy tabloids (Hall, 2011:12).

In early 1991, the Post Newspaper Limited was registered as a private company and the Independent Printers Limited was also later registered as a private publishing company (Barratt & Berger, 2007:92). On July 26, 1991, the *Weekly Post* commenced (Banda, 2004). In November 1993, the tabloid was renamed *The Post* and publication increased to Tuesdays and Fridays. On October 23, 1995, it went daily and was the second newspaper in Africa to go online just before February 1996, after South Africa's *The Mail and Guardian* went online in 1994 (Mungonge, 2007).

*The Post* workforce increased rapidly to more than 270 by the end of 2006 (Mungonge, 2007:67). In 2009, it had 26 shareholders as well as a board. Fred Mmembe the first Managing Director owned the largest percentage of shares (African Media Barometer, 2009). Michael Hall the first Managing Editor was still a shareholder. But Matsauso Phiri another founding member had sold his stake. Board Chairman Maurice Attala was one of the shareholders (Mungonge, 2007). Shareholders and board members had no say on its content (Mungonge, 2007:34).

Interestingly, during my fieldwork, some respondents revealed that the owner had actually a greater say on the news content. I have touched on this issue in more detail in Chapters Five and Six. Moreover, it is within this context that Kasoma (1996) points out that the newspaper is an individual piece of private property which has public responsibilities expressing the views of those people who are running it.

### **2.3. Mission statement and editorial policy**

*The Post's* mission statement was adopted in February 1991 (Mungonge, 2007: 84). It stressed the need to report accurately and objectively for the integrity of the tabloid. It also advocated for fair and reasonable press laws (Yoler *et al*, 2007). Its mission statement cited by Mungonge (2007:84) and confirmed during fieldwork (2011-2012) was summarised in quality, readership, democracy, and commercial imperatives:

**Quality:** to be the best to fill the knowledge gap and closely monitor accuracy, balance, clarity, and style of reporting, whilst improving on its design and production quality.

**Broad readership:** to embrace all readers from business executives to taxi drivers and inform them in an honest and independent manner of events at home and abroad.

**Democracy:** to question the policies and actions of authorities who wield or aspire to wield power over the lives of ordinary people and protect democracy and fundamental rights through campaigning, investigations, reporting, and analysis.

**Commercial:** to ensure the commercial viability and exploit the market through factual reporting and the management style of awareness to competing financial demands and to consequences of commercial actions.

The editorial policy of *The Post* was to strive for the independence of the editorial team (Mungonge, 2007). Editorial management was entrusted by shareholders and the board to take full responsibilities for their actions, control over diary meetings, and freedom to make day-to-day decisions. The editorial policy adopted in February 1991 (Mungonge, 2007:85) was summarised in professionalism, fairness, equality, and interest groups:

**Professionalism:** to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards and to defend, at all times, press freedom and strive at all times for balance in news, bearing in mind that there are always different views on any issue and on the interpretation of events.

**Fairness:** to expose the readers to different sides of the story through accurate, fair, and honest reporting and avoid suppressing, distorting, and censoring of news, unless publication endangers one's life, to rectify inaccuracies through apologies which are to receive due prominence, and to offer right of reply to issues of sufficient importance.

**Interests Groups:** to protect confidential sources of information and avoid distortion and suppression of the truth because of advertising and other considerations like personal interests of the directors or shareholders.

**Equality:** to mention a person's race, colour, illegitimacy, marital status, gender, sexual orientation or political affiliation when the information is strictly relevant.

In all these guidelines, I note that objectivity is a central strategic ritual of journalism practice and that news reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind (Kasoma, 1996). It demands journalists to distinguish facts from values for the newspaper to be recognised as a free arbiter of truth (Banda, 2007). Apart from editorial freedom, *The Post* strove for press freedom. In 2001, it set up the 'Press Freedom Committee' to help promote freedom of the press (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). It consistently reminded government of the need for press freedom and advocated for fair and reasonable laws (Chirwa, 1996). 'Newsmakers Forum' was provided monthly for various interest groups to express views on national issues. A bi-annual award was offered to a person that contributed most to freedom of the press (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

*The Post's* intention was for equitable, un-corrupt and participative journalistic practice (Mungonge, 2007). For example, the literature reveals that its journalists were instantly dismissed if they accepted bribes in exchange for good coverage of individuals (African Media Barometer, 2009). But during my fieldwork (2011-2012), there was no evidence to show that such a dismissal had happened before. In maintaining fairness; journalists travelling with political parties were given allowances by management for the period of the assignment (African Media Barometer, 2009:67). It also gave sufficient coverage of women's issues and there was an editorial policy that addressed gender mainstreaming in terms of content (African Media Barometer, 2009:36).

Therefore, some scholars note that since *The Post* was the only viable alternative to government owned press, it was responsible to ensure neutrality in news coverage (Phiri, 1999). In order to achieve neutrality, other scholars claim that it needed to consider partnering with another form of media organization in order to maintain its objectivity (Chirwa, 1996). It needed to consider working with other newspapers from other African countries to help spread press freedom throughout the continent (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

## 2.4 Professional practice

*The Post* followed its own code of professional standards and journalists were instilled with the belief that self-regulation started in the newsroom (Mungonge, 2007). Its management resisted belonging to a particular regulatory body arguing it was a way of government to impose control over the tabloid (African Media Barometer, 2009:60). For example, the tabloid was not a member of the Media Council of Zambia which was designed to be an ethical watchdog (Banda, 2006). Some scholars argue that although this was regarded as an indictment against the tabloid due to its criticism of government policies, nevertheless the media institutions that were members did not treat the organisation with any seriousness, which posed not only ethical but professional challenges (Banda, 2006:27).

In further discussing press freedom and journalists' limitations of their professional practice within democracy, *The Post* before 2011, reported accurately but not necessarily fairly as its news usually had a specific slant when it came to politics (Phiri, 1999). It tended to push the agenda of the opposition political parties with no or minimal positive comment from ruling government sources (African Media Barometer, 2009:62). From 2011, it became an ardent supporter of the government which affected its readership and its credibility (Amsterdam, 2012). I have touched on this issue in detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

*The Post* before 2011, generally sided with the opposition political parties and tended to highlight political aspects that supported its agenda accompanied by sensational headlines and pictures (Kasoma, 1997b). But even still, some opposition parties were not covered in the best light nor did they receive large quantities of coverage (Banda, 2006). As I have already noted in the previous Chapter on this issue, the problem usually started in the political culture of the newsrooms, as editors knew the kind of stories they wanted even before interviewing sources (Phiri, 1999). Journalists also tended to pick angles of news stories that suited what the tabloid stood for (African Media Barometer, 2009: 62). For example, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), the tabloid did not report any news critical of President Michael Sata but only quoted supporters of government policies (Amsterdam,

2012). I noted that many critics were often ignored and journalists rarely covered their press conferences. It could also be defended that since *The Post* was privately owned, it was not obliged to represent the citizens properly which could also pose further ethical questions (Mano, 2004).

On another note, *The Post's* journalists were often perceived as fearless for their willingness to investigate sensitive issues (Phiri, 2008). For example, the tabloid was often called a muckraker (Yoler *et al.*, 2007) for exposing corruption in government operations (Banda, 2007:4-5). Interestingly, the muckraking model of tabloid journalism is drawn from the romanticized period of American's yellow journalism. In this regard, Phiri (2008) explains that this imagery implies that muckrakers unearth evidence of the problem. The exposure of the problem leads to the mobilization of a changed public opinion, which in turn is reflected in policy initiatives by legislators and administrators (Phiri, 2008:25).

Another good example of press freedom and journalists' role in their professional practice within the muckraking model of *The Post* was on the way it exposed corruption at the Ministry of Lands. On February 27, 2007, it exposed Minister of Lands Gladys Nyorongo's allocation of land to herself, to her husband, to her son, and to her daughter without following government procedures. On February 28, 2007, the police invaded the Ministry of Lands arresting all staff while investigators rummaged through the records for implicating materials. Finally, the Minister was fired and corruption charges were brought against senior ministry officials (Phiri, 2008:26). I have touched on muckraking journalism in considerable detail in Chapter Four and its contribution to democracy.

Apart from the investigatory nature of *The Post*, its stories were often characterised by excessive use of unnamed sources (Phiri, 1999). Some scholars argue that typically, journalistic information takes the form of quotes from sources assembled in recognisable generic form meant to offer information to prove the source's credibility (Kasoma, 1995). At times the use of unnamed sources was often exaggerated by *The Post* (Moyo, 2005). This was a limiting factor on press freedom as authorities used this as a weapon to silence the

opposing views (Phiri, 1999). Moreover, publication of false news was a crime and sources were often harassed (Chama, 2012).

*The Post's* tendencies to use unnamed sources sometimes caused self-inflicted problems for its journalists before 2011 when it was under serious government attacks (Chirwa, 1996). For example, Kasoma (1997a:305) argues that perhaps it is important to tell their sources that if they are prepared to make serious allegations against other people, they should also be brave enough to prove their allegations publicly (Kasoma, 1997a:305). But again, it is difficult for journalists who are often victimised to operate freely and reveal sources (Chama, 2012). Generally, in tabloid journalism, un-named sources are meant to offer protection from harm and create trust for future news (Mapudzi, 2009).

Before, 2011, *The Post* not only positioned itself as the mouthpiece of the opposition but also published overtly adversarial material (Banda, 2004). It sometimes repeatedly displayed unprofessional recklessness in its use of pictures and headlines (Kasoma, 1997a). The result led to failure to become an independent and respectable forum for the discussion of serious public affairs. This behaviour occasionally provided the government with legitimate- if not legal, at least political- grounds for intervention (Phiri, 1999:62-63).

There were times in which the tabloid published numerous misleading front page headlines, inaccurate reports, and superficially researched articles (Yoler *et al*, 2007). This kind of recklessness led to reduced readership and, to a loss in the tabloid's ability to influence the agenda of the nation (Kasoma, 1997a). Besides, many readers often viewed the tabloid as an unreliable source of information and read it for entertainment rather than substance (Phiri, 1999). The entertainment value was typical of the tabloid content and often accompanied by big pictures (Mapudzi, 2009). Sometimes its pictures tended to be provocative to cultural values. For example, pictures that could be treated as soft pornography in Britain's *Sun* created conflict among citizens (Ndulo, 2009). But the general public were slowly coming to grips with tabloid journalism practice. *The Post's* provocative content triggered negative attitudes among the readers and raised many questions about

tabloid journalism practice in democracy (Kasoma, 1996). Generally, some scholars point out that tabloids have a serious contempt for their readers who are regarded as simple souls to be fed all sorts of information to the point of causing a 'moral panic' (Mapudzi, 2009).

The sensational and provocative content reported by *The Post* tended to attract criticisms from government authorities (Chama, 2012). For example, on September 30, 2006, supporters of the opposition (Patriotic Front) political party leader Michael Sata demonstrated outside the offices of *The Post* in protest against a story that predicted incumbent President Levy Mwanawasa was headed for victory following general elections held on September 28, 2006. Supporters were incensed by the lead story that the ruling political party was to win 81 parliamentary seats out of 150. They accused *The Post* of conniving with the government to send a wrong message to the general public (Taylor, 2006:93).

*The Post* usually came under intense criticism for its` sensational way of reporting (Kasoma, 1996). For example, if sensationalism only affected reader attitudes, the implications could have been less serious, but sometimes legitimized government hostility toward the tabloid (Kasoma, 1997a). In this regard, some scholars point out that to maintain its integrity, the tabloid needed to ensure objectivity (Yoler et al., 2007). But again, even though obsession with objectivity receives many critics as putting facts before ideas, and is attributed to 'Westernisation', the appeal to objectivity than philosophical speculations is regarded necessary in journalism practice (Kasoma, 1996).

Even though press freedom was hindered by authorities' intolerance of opposing views often expressed by journalists within their professional practice, my literature review in Chapter One and fieldwork show that at times, the professional recklessness of *The Post* justified government limitations on press freedom (Phiri, 1999). For example, before 2011, the tabloid tended to side with the opposition political parties and at times, used offensive language against perceived enemies (Kasoma, 1996). Even if opposition parties within democracy seek to remove the party in power by exposing its weakness; that is not necessarily the role



of the newspaper in a democracy (Phiri, 1999). By seeing itself as equivalent to the opposition, *The Post* lost its objectivity (Kasoma, 1997a:300).

There were also moments the tabloid engaged in ill-conceived advocacy journalism, which in itself is good if done according to the rules but could turn sour when the basic journalistic norms under which it should be practiced are ignored (Kasoma, 1997a). For example, there were occasions when *The Post* referred to President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) as a fool and an idiot (Phiri, 2008). I argue that even though newspapers are critical to monitoring government operations, there is supposed to be a big distinction between being critical and actually insulting someone (Kasoma, 1997a:301). It is within this context that some scholars recommended that in order for *The Post* to become more reputable and respected, its journalists needed proper continuous training (Phiri, 1999). Other scholars also noted that oftentimes within articles, there were typos or grammatical mistakes and a lack of sources, and to be taken more seriously, it needed to improve on the quality of news writing and reporting (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

## **2.5. Political context**

The political environment heavily impacts on press freedom within democracy (Ogbonnah, 1994). For example, before 2011, the political landscape impacted negatively on freedom of *The Post* regularly (Chirwa, 1996). It was difficult for the tabloid to emerge as a strong independent influence contrary to the optimism of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Phiri, 1999). This was despite its owner being an active player in the founding of a political party (Movement for Multiparty Democracy) in July 1990, which helped to remove President Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991), and install the country's first democratically elected President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) after 27 years of one-party rule (Global Journalist, 2000). Chiluba's election as a second President in 1991 was the second time multi-party elections were held following the 1968 general election (Barratt & Berger, 2007:92). Despite *The Post* helping to shift democracy, the elected government in 1991 then targeted it with intimidation and harassment (Chirwa, 1996). The main reason for the turn of events was due to the

tabloids hard-line against corruption in government and lack of honouring democratic promises by President Frederick Chiluba (Phiri, 1999).

*The Post* endured hostile and challenging political contexts (Mungonge, 2007:50) with some of its journalists arrested and imprisoned (Barratt & Berger, 2007: 92). Journalists were often detained on several occasions in overcrowded police cells (Mungonge, 2007). From 1991 to 2011, 20 years after the re-introduction of political pluralism, *The Post* faced numerous legal and political challenges which impacted negatively on its freedom of expression (Chirwa, 1996).

The reason was simple; even though multi-party democracy was embraced in 1991, there were no concomitant changes to the legal and political regime to buttress the new democratic culture (Chilombo, *et al.*, 2007). Through the years (1991-2011), *The Post* journalists were charged with criminal defamation, criminally defaming the president, contempt of parliament, possessing and publishing classified documents, publishing false information, treason, sedition and inciting the army to revolt (Mathurine, 2004). *The Post* received more libel charges in its existence than any other publication (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

From 1995 to 2000, the tabloid was characterised by acrimonious relations with government, which intensified in 2001 when President Frederick Chiluba wanted to change the Constitution to stand for the third term, a move which was resisted by many citizens (Chilombo *et al.*, 2007:112). Its journalists were always threatened and served with lawsuits (Mungonge, 2007:51). Its owner Fred Mmembe was exposed to the possibility of spending more than 100 years in jail if convicted (1991-2011) and some of the tabloid editions were banned or confiscated (Mungonge, 2007).

For example, on June 4, 2010, Mmembe was imprisoned for four months with hard labour for contempt of court (Kalaluka, 2010). There were many other instances when its journalists were arrested, harassed, sued, and generally intimidated (Chirwa, 1996). But this did not deter the tabloid from expressing its point of view on various social and political issues

(Barratt & Berger, 2007). This was despite suffering threats of closure by ruling politicians whenever it consistently published articles in support of the opposition (Hamasaka, 2008).

Press freedom was limited by government authorities who targeted journalists in their professional practice within the broader context of democracy such as in 1996 when the tabloid's printing press was stopped by the government, and its editorial office raided by the police and the pro-government political cadres (Global Journalist, 2000). *The Post* edition of February 5, 1996, which revealed the government plans to hold both a referendum to adopt a proposed Constitution and national elections simultaneously was banned by the government arguing that it revealed 'classified materials' (Amnesty International Report, 1996). I should point out here that it was a criminal offence to publish 'classified materials' and carried two years imprisonment upon conviction. It was within this context that journalists Fred Mmembe, Bright Mwape and Masautso Phiri were charged with possession of a banned publication (Mathurine, 2004).

On another note, publication of false news knowingly or unknowingly was also a criminal offence and carried a jail term of three years (Louw, 2004:55). This law was very vague in the definition of 'false news' and journalists were arrested and charged whether they knew or did not know that the news was false at the time of publication (Berger, 2007:131). For example, in August 1994, nine journalists were charged with various cases including one count of publication of false news. This was after publishing an article that the United Nations accused Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo of violating sanctions against an Angolan rebel movement (Amnesty International, 1996).

*The Post* was also a victim of the law that prohibited anybody from defaming the President (Makungu, 2004). The offence carried three years imprisonment without an option of a fine upon conviction (African Media Barometer, 2009:17). Some scholars argued that the government appeared content to maintain the law despite arguments by the tabloid that it was supposed to be repealed (Taylor, 2006:91). In fact, there was a long list of instances journalists were arrested and charged (Chirwa, 1996).

For example, in June 1995, some journalists were charged with defamation after publishing an article quoting a woman who claimed to be the lover of President Frederick Chiluba since 1983 (Amnesty International, 1996). Furthermore, in August 2001, government authorities arrested journalists Fred Mmembe and Bivan Saluseki, and a Member of Parliament, Edith Nawakwi, on charges of defaming the President. Nawakwi publicly accused President Frederick Chiluba of theft, which Saluseki subsequently reported and Mmembe reiterated the claim in an editorial (Mathurine, 2004:77). In another incident, in April 2004, satirical journalist Roy Clarke was charged with defamation after comparing President Levy Mwanawasa to a foolish elephant and two government ministers to baboons (Mathurine, 2004). Similarly, in November 2005, journalist Fred Mmembe pleaded not guilty to a charge of defamation after publishing an editorial arguing that President Levy Mwanawasa exhibited foolishness, stupidity, and lack of humility with regard to the adoption of the proposed new Constitution (Berger, 2007:134).

In addition, on January 23, 2006, police recorded a statement again from Mmembe in connection with a letter published on January 20, 2006, alleging that President Levy Mwanawasa ordered the arrest of opposition Patriotic Front supporters who waved at him while leaving Parliament on January 13, 2006, after the official opening. Such a letter turned out to be a forgery, but the tabloid disclosed that the Patriotic Front leader Michael Sata was the source of the allegedly forged letter upon which it based its lead story. The government dismissed the charge of defamation against the tabloid on February 14, 2006 (Taylor, 2006:95).

Defamation charges were easily abused by politicians to harass journalists (Chama, 2012). The law did not provide clear guidelines for determining what constituted 'insulting matter' (Chanda, 1998). Sometimes politicians engaged the police to detain journalists (Makungu, 2004). Apparently, the police were given the discretion to decide what publications were 'insulting' or 'defamatory' (Louw, 2004). Occasionally, *The Post* published the pictures that bordered on soft pornography (Ndulo, 2009). But still, publication of obscene materials was a criminal offence and carried five years imprisonment upon conviction (Louw, 2004). I

should stress here that the law on obscenity was vague in its definition and led to its abuse by government authorities to intimidate and harass journalists (African Media Barometer, 2009:17).

The vagueness of the law triggered injustices on journalists such as arbitrary arrests (Berger, 2007:131). For example, in July 2009, journalist Chansa Kabwela was arrested and charged for circulating photographs of a woman that gave birth on the street (Ndulo, 2009). Photographs were sent by the relative and after authenticating them, the journalist sent them to the President, the Vice President, the Minister of Health, and a few civil society organizations accompanied by a letter that implored relevant authorities to end the medical strike as it had a negative impact on citizens (African Media Barometer, 2009).

On national security matters, publication of government held information useful to a foreign power was a criminal offence (Berger, 2007). The State Security Act made prohibitions that related to state security and carried not less than 20 years' imprisonment (African Media Barometer, 2009: 24). On March 9, 1999, *The Post* published a lead story 'Angola Worries Zambia Army' quoting senior military officers that argued that the country could not withstand a military attack by Angola (Johnson, 1999). An article triggered uproar in the National Assembly prompting the Minister of Defence to take action against the tabloid for "putting the country's security under threat" (Global Journalist, 2000).

In the biggest crackdown in *The Post's* history, the police invaded its premises on the night of March 9, 1999. This was after an order from the government to arrest the entire staff before dawn (Johnson, 1999). Police laid a parallel siege at the tabloid editorial office and the printing press. By the following morning, the police arrested six journalists. For the first time in its eight year history, the tabloid failed to appear on the streets on March 11, 1999. On March 12, 1999, following a habeas corpus application, journalists were released and formally charged with espionage on March 17, 1999 (Amnesty International, 1996; Mathurine, 2004).

Besides, publication of government information obtained as a result of one's present or former employment with the government was a criminal offence and carried 25 years imprisonment upon conviction (Berger, 2007). This was a 'catch-all' prohibition as both the giver and receiver of classified information was vulnerable to prosecution with or without prior knowledge that the information was official when it was received (Louw, 2004). Within this law, even the publication of leaked government information was prohibited and the lack of guidelines to judge information as official led to abuse by political authorities (Berger, 2007:131). For example, in December 1994, journalists Fred Mmembe and Mulenga Chomba were arrested and charged with treason, sedition, possessing and printing classified and official documents, and inciting the army to revolt. They published leaked information quoting unnamed sources inside the army that described dissatisfaction among soldiers and that bordered on mutiny (Amnesty International, 1996).

Therefore, there was documented evidence to show that there were many factors that negatively impacted on press freedom and on journalists' role in their professional practice within democracy (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996). For example, journalists were arrested and charged for violating the National Assembly Act, which gave parliament special protection and privileges (Berger, 2007). Under the law, it was an offence to publish any 'false or scandalous' materials directed at the National Assembly or any of its committees (Louw, 2004:58). Interestingly, the terms 'false' and 'scandalous' materials were highly subjective and easily abused by politicians to avoid legitimate criticism of the National Assembly (Banda, 2007:4). The offence carried a fine or imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not exceeding three months (African Media Barometer, 2009:18).

On February 20, 1999, *The Post* published articles against the speech by Vice President Godfrey Miyanda which criticised a January 10, 1996 decision by the Supreme Court striking down sections of the Public Order Act that required police permits to hold public meetings (Amnesty International, 1996). The articles prompted the Speaker of the National Assembly Robinson Nabulyato to announce on February 20, 1996 that journalists Fred Mmembe, and

Bright Mwape and Columnist Lucy Sichone violated the National Assembly Act by publishing inflammatory remarks that lowered the authority and dignity of the house.

The Standing Order Committee of the National Assembly met on February 22, 1999, and found them guilty of contempt of parliament and sentenced them to indefinite detention (Global Journalist, 2000). The three were ordered to appear before the National Assembly to be informed of their sentence but failed to turn up, and an order of arrest was issued by the Speaker on February 26, 1999. Police then launched a manhunt and on March 4, 1999. Finally, two journalists reported to parliament where police took them into custody. They were held in separate notorious maximum prisons for almost a month under grim conditions (Global Journalist, 2000).

On another issue, *The Post* suffered political intimidation of being deregistered by the government whenever it published articles in support of the opposition (Hamasaka, 2008). For example, the Printed Publication Act of 1994 obliged every publication to be registered with full names and addresses of the proprietor, the editor, the printer, the publisher, and the description of the premises (Banda, 2006:11). It was an offence to publish a newspaper without first registering it with the Director of the National Archives (Louw, 2004:54). The government often used the registration requirement as a weapon to intimidate and threaten the tabloid whenever it continuously criticises its operations. For example, during 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections, the tabloid suffered threats of being deregistered by government. Journalists also suffered numerous incidents of violent attacks from the ruling political party cadres (Hamasaka, 2008:114).

Therefore, the political and legal situation was precarious for the tabloid (Chama, 2012). For example, since publication of false news was a crime, it was difficult to know how far to go in verifying information, and since there was no freedom of Information legislation, it was difficult to access information and usually undercover methods were used (Phiri, 2008). Furthermore, there was no law that protected confidential sources of information and whistle blowers, while publication of leaked government information was prohibited (Makungu,

2004). The legal and political environment made it difficult to know how far to go in seeking out information and disseminating it (Banda, 2006:6). Moreover, journalists often published news at their own risk (Chanda, 1998). Despite the legal and political framework which impacted negatively on the work of journalists, *The Post* attracted readers as the only viable source of information before changing its political positioning in 2011. Obviously, the change affected the democratic participation of the citizens who were dependent on the tabloid as the only viable source of information (Mungonge, 2007).

Before 2011, the legal and political situation affected commercial imperatives of *The Post* as many advertisers tended to be pressured to advertise in government newspapers (Phiri, 2008). Government departments too were often directed not to advertise in *The Post* (African Media Barometer, 2009). Advertising directives were common during President Frederick Chiluba's (1991-2001) regime and were meant to deprive the tabloid of business forcing it to close down eventually (Mungonge, 2007).

## **2.6. Sales and advertising**

Sales and advertising generally impacts heavily on press freedom and on journalists' professional practice within the broader context of democracy (African Media Barometer, 2009). For example, *The Post* from 1991 was mainly funded exclusively through sales and advertising (Mungonge, 2007). Initially, its sales and advertising expansion was very slow and needed alternative funds. By 1993, *The Post* was widely recognized as a highly successful and leading daily newspaper with 80 percent of the market share (Banda, 2004). From 1994 to 1995, it was heavily dependent on advertising revenues from both small and large-scale businesses and relied mainly on income from copy sales (Mungonge, 2007:51).

But from 1995 to 1999, *The Post's* finances were limited due to insufficient readership and coverage, which affected advertising (Banda, 2004). There was a possibility that it was to close down by March 2000 if nothing was done (Mungonge, 2007: 5). Initially, the first serious problem was due to political harassment (Chirwa, 1996). Then, the Zambia Revenue



Authority in June 2000 needed to be paid outstanding bills immediately (Mungonge, 2007). Fortunately, the Media Institute of Southern Africa came to its aid with the loan which ensured its survival. Since then, the tabloid continued to grow (Mungonge, 2007: 51).

During the 2001 presidential and parliamentary election, the Electoral Commission of Zambia used all media institutions to advertise to the electorate and *The Post* was able to source advertising revenues directly from the organisation (Phiri, 2008). Coincidentally, the change of government and political leadership in 2001 also benefited *The Post* (Makungu, 2004). Newly elected President Levy Mwanawasa commenced a fight against corruption in the previous government, and the tabloid produced more editions which exposed illegal financial transactions, and that attracted wider readership (Phiri, 2008).

Corruption stories by *The Post* attracted many readers and its sales improved as many citizens got information first from the tabloid (Phiri, 2008). It initiated many of the stories about corruption (Banda, 2007). Even before President Levy Mwanawasa came into power, it was the first newspaper to carry out the lead story on August 17, 2001, that 'Chiluba is a thief' while he was still a serving President. Chiluba, whose two terms of office from 1991 to 2001 were coming to an end, took *The Post* to court claiming libel damages (Phiri, 2008:16).

During the reign of President Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008), the fight against corruption intensified and *The Post* was on the forefront of exposing government corruption with outlandish headlines and editorial comments (Banda, 2007). For example, on May 12, 2007, *The Post* argued that President Frederick Chiluba could not show remorse for stealing from the poor citizens. On May 18, 2007, *The Post* argued that Chiluba was supposed to be disgraced for behaving like a monkey in a maize field (Phiri, 2008). Corruption headlines and stories attracted a lot of readership and sales revenues (Chama, 2012; Banda, 2007).

By 2007, *The Post* was financially stable and more organised than government owned newspapers (Mungonge, 2007:51). It even diversified and invested in real estate that included houses to ensure that it continued to publish even in times of economic adversity.

By 2012, it even published an educational supplement with the aim of attracting students and teachers further boosting its sales (Mungonge, 2007). It also published the business supplement, an initiative that was born out of the Business Development Services project of the International Labour Organisation. The project injected funding into *The Post* to conduct an assessment of the potential 'market' for a new product that targeted 'small scale to medium businesses' (Banda *et al.*, 2005). Apart from the *Education Post* and the *Business Post*, it also published the *Saturday Post*, the *Sunday Post* and a business classified *Sangwapo* only for advertisements. Diversity in the tabloid publications was meant to attract more news coverage. It was also meant to attract more readers, which in turn attracted more adverts and sales. It could be concluded; on the basis of this, that *The Post* was more inclusive of many readers (Banda, 2006:27).

Even though 'sales and advertising' played a critical role on the survival of the tabloid, they were also limiting factors on its press freedom and on its professional practice within the broader context of democracy (Banda, 2007). For example, before 2011, *The Post* was sometimes sidelined by government when it came to the placing of adverts (Phiri, 2008). The government was the biggest advertiser and used its power over the placement of adverts to favour its own newspapers (Mathurine, 2004:78). Usually this happened when it was not happy with some aspects of reporting by the tabloid (Hamasaka, 2008). For example, in April 2009, the Minister of Communication and Transport, Dora Siliya, was brought before a tribunal to investigate her conduct in the awarding of a tender (Katulwende, 2009). Due to what the government considered negative reporting by the tabloid, directing all government departments not to advertise in its pages (African Media Barometer, 2009:42). Generally, scholarly debates show that newspapers depend largely on advertising revenues and while playing a critical role in democracy, market interests dictate their operations (McManus, 1994). In fact, advertising is the main source of revenue for many newspapers (Banda, 2007).

In further discussing advertising within political context, President Frederick Chiluba's (1991-2001) government also instructed ministries and departments not to advertise in *The Post*, a

position which was later reversed by President Levy Mwanawasa (Banda, 2006:27). The government used the advertising directive to punish the tabloid (Phiri, 2008). The advertising directive was an unwritten rule and usually happened when the government did not like what was published by *The Post* (Hamasaka, 2008). The government desired to punish the tabloid by withholding advertising and was known to put pressure on other advertisers, implying that if they wanted to be awarded government tenders, they were not supposed to advertise in it (Mungonge, 2007).

Advertising pressure by the government was meant to make sure that the tabloid was taken out of business leading to its own closure (Phiri, 2008). Before 2011, there were scholars that claimed that most of the adverts in the tabloid were not funded by the government (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). This was despite enjoying more than 54 percent of the market share (Banda, 2004). Therefore, even though *The Post's* aim was to promote democracy and fill the knowledge gap; the commercial imperatives dictated its operations (Mungonge, 2007). For example, it needed sales and advertising income to keep playing its watchdog role over government operations. Despite advocating for press freedom, the political and legal environment affected its operations in remaining competitive financially. Therefore, even though it promoted democracy and press freedom, sales and advertising impacted on its survival (Banda, 2007). Moreover, there were other issues of circulation and printing that impacted on its contribution to democracy (Phiri, 2008).

## **2.7. Circulation and printing**

*The Post* enjoyed the highest circulation figures and was audited by the London based Audit Bureau of Circulation until 2003 (Mungonge, 2007). It was launched with an average circulation of 40,000 copies and continued to grow significantly since the acquisition of modern colour printing machinery and enjoyed 70 per cent of distribution locally (Mungonge, 2007:57). However, it should be acknowledged that low circulation figures and high printing costs were limiting factors on press freedom and on journalists' role in their professional practice within the broader context of democracy (Banda, 2004).

For example, *The Post* was the widest read newspaper with 0.39 percent, then the *Times of Zambia* with 0.26 percent, followed by the *Zambia Daily Mail* with 0.20 percent, while the other smaller newspapers shared the 0.15 percent (Banda, 2006). Generally, circulation figures were computed from the information supplied by *The Post* itself and was not subjected to any independent verification (Banda, 2004). It should also be emphasized that the figures were based on the tabloid circulation as a percentage of national literacy level and sometimes figures were inflated to attract advertisers and did not necessarily reflect readership as such (Banda, 2006).

Besides, *The Post* readership was oftentimes limited by its relatively high cost of US\$0.75 where a loaf of bread was US\$0.80 (Phiri, 2008). Moreover, official government statistics showed that 64 percent of the population lived under US\$1.00 a day (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Besides, the poor road network meant that there were numerous parts that did not receive *The Post* (Banda, 2004). Poor road networks made *The Post* distribution expensive. But despite the poor road networks, *The Post* enjoyed the highest circulation with a print run of 60 000 copies a day (Mungonge, 2007). This was still insignificant in a population of 13 million people according to 2010 census (Central Statistics Office, 2011). I should stress here that *The Post* was predominantly an urban medium (Banda, 2004). Even if 100 copies were sent to remote areas, less than half could be sold either due to the cost of the tabloid or due to poor reading culture (African Media Barometer, 2009:34).

This scenario explained why by 2009, *The Post* actually reduced its circulation to remote areas and was giving free copies to 10 schools in each province as a means of encouraging a newspaper reading culture and keeping both scholars and teachers informed about the country (African Media Barometer, 2009). *The Post* circulation in rural areas was so scarce that in some places, one copy could be read by up to 300 people (Banda, 2004). Besides, I should also point out here that the improvement in the reading culture led to the widespread practice of sharing newspapers (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). This was evidenced from the 16 percent

increase in the adult literacy rate between 2003 and 2006 from 66.9 percent to 80.6 percent in 2006 (Banda, 2006:27).

Unfortunately, there were still no distribution partnerships among newspapers in the country to help reduce the costs of delivering to remote areas (African Media Barometer, 2009). But *The Post* acquired its own courier service to quickly and effectively broaden its sourcing of news stories (Banda, 2006). In fact, the high cost of printing led in *The Post* to cut down on its print-run and size (African Media Barometer, 2009: 8-9). For example, the Lifestyle edition was reduced from 24 pages to 16 pages by July 2009 (Banda, 2006). On the other hand, despite the souring production expenses, the tabloid managed to adapt to economic changes (African Media Barometer, 2009).

Besides, the government used its power to control the expansion and circulation of the tabloid (Phiri, 2008). For example, on February 3, 2006, Finance Minister Ngandu Magande announced that the Value Added Tax was to be charged on all newspapers. The announcement was followed by an amendment of the Value Added Tax Act on March 8, 2006. It took the combined pressure of media associations, civil society organisations and the general public to force government to withdraw the legislation on March 15, 2006. Victory on the Value Added Tax saved the tabloid from possible collapse (Taylor, 2006:92).

## **2.8. *The Post* online**

The Internet penetration in African was very slow and was another limiting factor on press freedom and on journalists' professional practice within democracy (Banda, 2010). However, *The Post* was also online (<http://postzambia.com>) and even if it was not updated regularly, only carried aggregate of major news headlines as compared to its hardcopy publication. As already signalled, it was the second newspaper to go online in Africa just before February 1996 after South Africa's *Mail and Guardian* went online in 1994 (Mungonge, 2007).

Online publication of *The Post* provided news especially to citizens that lived abroad who were not able to access the hardcopies (Banda, 2010). *The Post* initiative to go online was an important development at a time when printing materials were so expensive and online publication offered a cheaper alternative to print (African Media Barometer, 2009:72). In fact, some scholars argue that in the age of the Internet, to practice random acts of journalism, one does need a big-league publication with a slick website (Allan, 2004:171). Unfortunately, in many African countries, the Internet was still considered a luxury by many citizens who did not have an easy access to online sources because of slow development in information communication technologies (Banda, 2010).

Besides, the websites were legally not required to register with government authorities and many were not even registered with local Internet service providers. This made it difficult for the government to impose any kind of control over them (Mwenya, 2012). For example, the Electronic Communications and Transactions Bill 2009 mandated the Communications Authority to license and regulate only the .zm domain name space. Furthermore, the Information Communication Technology Bill 2009 only covered the regulation in the provision of electronic communication services and products and even though compelled service providers to obtain licences did not refer directly to the Internet or the need for registration.

On the other hand, even though government blocked a number of newspapers that operated online such as the *Zambia Reports* and the *Zambian Watchdog* (Adam, 2012; Mwenya, 2012), it argued that it did not seek to block or filter the Internet content except in situations that served a legitimate interest and that was necessary in a democratic society (African Media Barometer, 2009:24)

There were generally no restrictive or coercive laws that were passed against online publications (Banda, 2010). But still, the government continued to be listed by Reporters Sans Frontières as 'enemy of the Internet' due to repressive laws that started to affect online publications (Adam, 2012). For example, in the first act of Internet censorship in Africa

(Global Journalist, 2010), the government attempted to censor an Internet publication of *The Post* in 1996 that revealed government plans to hold a referendum to adopt a proposed new Constitution and election simultaneously the same year (Amnesty International Report, 1996). As already argued, the government authorities felt that the February 5, 1996 edition violated the State Security Act by revealing 'classified information'. It even blocked access to a censored issue of the tabloid and threatened the local Internet provider Zamnet, with lawsuits if the forbidden issue was posted online (Mathurine, 2004:73-75).

Since then, *The Post* online was not hosted by local Internet providers Zamnet (Banda, 2010). This made it difficult for government to impose any kind of legal and political control over its online publication (African Media Barometer, 2009:24). But still, journalists were often warned and threatened by government to avoid posting news content on the website that was not substantiated (Adam, 2012). Despite the Internet challenges, *The Post* online ensured that citizens had more news options. It also provided a platform for its online users to comment on its news articles (Banda, 2010). This in turn brought about informed citizenry that led to transparency in government operations. Moreover, *The Post* online publication made it easy for citizens that lived abroad to monitor government decision-making processes more closely. Therefore, online journalism was enhancing the role of journalists in analysing information in emerging democracies (Banda, 2010).

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This Chapter shows that *The Post* emerged as a result of unbalanced political news in the run up to the multiparty party politics in 1991 (Mungonge, 2007). Before that, President Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991) deprived citizens of a balanced information while suppressed critical newspapers (Taylor, 2006:90). But still, from 1991, President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) committed numerous violations against *The Post* journalists (Taylor, 2006:90). In fact, *The Post* experienced difficult periods due to its hard-line position in exposing government corruption (Global Journalist, 2000).

Ironically, *The Post* was an active player in bringing President Frederick Chiluba into power in 1991 (Global Journalist, 2000). It helped to oust President Kenneth Kaunda after 28 years of authoritarian rule and install the first democratically elected leader who later led the fight against the tabloid. This was partly because it took the lead in criticizing the government after failure to implement election campaign promises (Global Journalist, 2000). *The Post's* critical reporting was often in conflict with government, which resulted in its journalists being charged with numerous cases (Chirwa, 1996). The government orchestrated many charges against the tabloid (African Media Barometer, 2009).

During President Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008), the tabloid benefited in its coverage of corruption scandals and attracted many readers (Phiri, 2008). It was able to advertise with government especially the Electoral Commission of Zambia. But this was only for a brief moment as government continued attempts to silence the tabloid due to its negative editorial comments (Chama, 2012). Despite the government making a lot of promises to reform the media laws, Mwanawasa admitted on January 13, 2006, in an address to parliament that he was disappointed for failing to mention when the Freedom of Information Bill was to be enacted (Taylor, 2006:90).

President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) carried out several unprecedented attempts to permanently silence *The Post* (Kalaluka, 2010). The situation led to its journalists to start segregating themselves for protection against infiltration by government intelligence agents. There were always political elements that were constantly trying to drown the tabloid; segregation was the only viable option to survive the government's dispensations (African Media Barometer, 2009:67). For example, *The Post* was stopped by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services from starting a television and a radio station arguing that it already owned a newspaper (Phiri, 2008). Interestingly, the Zambia Competition Commission enforced the Fair Practices Act despite not having specific legislation to deal with media diversity. This meant that theoretically it provided for adequate competition in media. It generally prescribed monopolies despite being applied selectively. For example,



the government was able to have its own concentration of print and broadcasting media enterprises (African Media Barometer, 2009:36).

On another note, *The Post* was instrumental in the formation of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which desired to foster free, independent, and diverse media throughout Southern Africa (Banda, 2004). It strived and campaigned to uphold the principle of press freedom, to uncover the truth, and to report the facts (Global Journalist, 2000). I should note here that the future of the tabloid to be effectively guaranteed rested on many factors which included political, legal and economic reasons (Chama, 2012; Banda, 2007; Phiri, 1999). Besides, the legal and political environment needed to reform to guarantee a promising future for the tabloid (Phiri, 2008). On another note, a confrontational relationship between government and the tabloid was not healthy (Chama, 2012). In fact, the fight for press freedom looked set to take longer to be achieved, guaranteed and even protected (Himaambo, 2010).

Therefore, this Chapter presented the background information on the formation of *The Post*, its mission statement, its editorial policies, its professional practises, its political issues and its legal underpinnings. It also looked at its sales, its circulations, its advertising and its online publication. Within this Chapter, the major issues are that the tabloid before changing its political positioning in 2011, operated in a very volatile and authoritarian environment which was not conducive for the development of democracy. It emerged at a time of political change to democracy when critical citizens were suppressed by the government (Mushota, 1989). Being a tabloid in an environment with high levels of poverty and functional illiteracy meant poor readership and sales revenues (Banda, 2004). It endured harassment and intimidation from government and political cadres who attempted on several occasions to water down its reporting (Chirwa, 1999). Despite its economic and political struggles, the tabloid was credited for opening up the democratic space of holding political leaders accountable (Phiri, 2008). The next Chapter presents the research methodology which was used for this study. It looks at the issues that emerged while in the field. It also provides the sampling procedures including the limitations and ethical issues.

## Chapter III

### Research methodology and techniques

The Chapter explains how the conceptual and methodological frameworks were operational, how key procedures were followed in sequence, and the nature of logistical decisions which were made throughout the research process. I should note here that I investigated *The Post* to understand press freedom and factors that limit journalists within the professional practice in the context of an emerging democracy through in-depth interviews.

After completing my literature review and the research method framework, I went for fieldwork (2011-2012) to Lusaka, Zambia's national capital and the home to *The Post*. But before going, I made the arrangement with the tabloid journalists in advance. While in the field, I carried out in-depth interviews to explore their perceptions of press freedom and their professional practice challenges and how they impacted on the maturity of democracy. After conducting the interviews, I used pseudonyms in order to protect respondents' identities as the political environment was not conducive for their safety (Chama, 2012).

I should also note here that while in the field, I conducted content analysis of *The Post* editions to highlight the impact of muckraking journalism which was perceived as vital for democracy and for opening up the culture of accountability as presented in the next Chapter. I should also stress here that investigative stories presented in the next Chapter provides insights under which the tabloid journalists worked and issues they encountered within an emerging democracy as mentioned by themselves in Chapters Five and Six (Ogbondah, 1994).

There were several ways to study the articulation of tabloid journalists (Mano, 2005). For example, Deuze (2002) and Bird (1990) interrogate the tabloid development by analysing the perceptions of tabloid journalists in the field of popular journalism in the Netherlands and the United States regarding their work and values and argue that there are many ways to

approach the investigations. In my case, my study engaged a range of interviews with tabloid journalists in order to understand their experiences within an emerging democracy. During my fieldwork (2011-2012), listening carefully to tabloid journalists offered me insights about the profession within the information and entertainment margins.

### **3.0. Introduction**

In order to answer my central research question on press freedom and on factors that limit journalists in their professional practice within the context of an emerging democracy through the case of *The Post*, I used in-depth interviews with tabloid journalists as respondents in order to gain insights on their experiences. Besides, scholarly debates show that the method of in-depth interviews is intended to extract rich information (Mack *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, I interviewed my respondents to get as much information as possible on how they practiced their journalism profession and their limiting factors (Moyo, 2005).

I should clarify that my study on *The Post* commenced in 2010 and finished in 2013. Within this period, the political situation and positioning including the professional practice of the tabloid changed. Generally, change in the research context affected my research findings (Yin, 1994). But despite being open to changes, I did not anticipate the tabloid becoming an ardent supporter of the government. Moreover, some scholars argue that it is not easy to foresee every potential change in the research environment because of the difficulties associated with predicting the future correctly in social sciences (Iorio, 2004).

### **3.1. Case-study**

I chose *The Post* because it provided a good case of an enduring publication in an emerging democracy within the study of press freedom and limiting professional factors of tabloid journalists (Phiri, 1999). Since the case was small, interviewing its journalists and engaging with their own personal experiences was manageable. Prior to my fieldwork, I conducted the literature review in Chapters One and Two which was difficult because there were few

studies that discussed tabloid journalism in Africa and none engaged with respondents in the field of work (Mano, 2005). For example, Wasserman (2008) looked at tabloid journalism and culture in South Africa, while Ongowo (2011) looked at the ethics of investigative tabloid journalism in Kenya. Similarly, Mano (2005) looked at tabloids and broadsheets within the context of press freedom, professionalism and proprietorship in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Mapudzi (2009) looked at the popularity of tabloids within the context of reception analysis in South Africa.

I chose *The Post* because it was the longest serving tabloid since 1991 (Banda, 2004) and was also vibrant in promoting press freedom (Chama, 2012). It provided more insights, new understanding and new interpretations on tabloid journalism practice presented in Chapter Seven. It was an appropriate case to explore the dynamics of press freedom in political affairs and the role of tabloid journalism in emerging democracy. For example, Yin (1994) explains that a case should be (a) a critical case (a case that meets all the condition for study); (b) an extreme case (a case so extraordinary that it warrants investigation); (c) and a revelatory case (a case that offers the opportunity to study a phenomenon) previously inaccessible to scientific investigation.

To link this to my own research, *The Post* was a critical case as it suffered the heaviest arrests and intimidation among all newspapers in the country and provided good conditions for the study (Chirwa, 1996), an extreme case as it was an enduring tabloid publication within in an emerging democracy (Phiri, 1999) and a revelatory case as no research was conducted before my study on how it functioned as a tabloid within the culture of intolerance and using a genre that was new in the region.

During my fieldwork (2011-2012), I drew data from literature sources about the tabloid and from interviews with its journalists. It was important to give journalists a platform to get sufficient insights on their real life experiences. I chose *The Post* because of my inherent interest in tabloid journalism, in press freedom, and because of my in-depth knowledge of the political and legal environment where it operated. Generally, scholars emphasize that

knowledge, familiarity, and interest in the case puts the investigator in the position to 'poke and soak' in order to offer a reasoned explanation based on rich knowledge of research setting and circumstances (Fenno, 1986).

My decision to use the *The Post* was to understand my problem intensively in considerable depth (Merriam, 1998). Generally, case-studies are explanatory research investigations that explore causation to find underlying principles (Fenno, 1986). They explain what causes one thing to happen in relation to another within the area of study (Ragin, 1987). Therefore, through the tabloid, I explained the causal relation of press freedom and factors that hindered journalists' in their professional practice within democracy (Kasoma, 1996).

In this regard, I interviewed my respondents in the field while on duty while some other interviews were conducted when respondents were just completing their assignments for the day. In fact, many of my respondents I interviewed trained as regular journalists before joining the tabloid and claimed they applied the same basic journalism strategies (Phiri, 2008). I carried out interviews over the period of six months from January 2012 to July 2012. Journalists explained how the stories were assembled and explored how the much-touted 'accuracy' worked, and how, at times, writing was a nightmare as I have presented in Chapters Five and Six. They discussed how news was selected and organised and how editors removed or added information to the stories (Mano, 2005). They also explained how information from the source was manipulated to make it snappier and even on the kind of questioning the sources which was meant to obtain the required dramatic quotes.

Other respondents explained on the way they questioned sources in a way that was meant to put words into their mouths and argued that it was common for them to get someone to speak about a contentious issue and then get another person to back it up or refute the allegation depending on the message that needed to be put across (Mapudzi, 2009). For example, the nature of question to expose corruption is highlighted in the next Chapter on investigatory stories within tabloid journalism within the broader context of press freedom and democracy.

Generally, some scholars claim that once tabloid journalists get a storyline, they try to get comments to back it; if it is just absolutely not true then the story is dropped (Wasserman, 2008). But, dropping the story is a last resort and sometimes a little persuasion helps (Deuze, 2005). Just because sources are a little hesitant at first to provide that 'good money quote' does not mean that one has to give up (Mapudzi, 2009). A lot of people may agree with the sources, but may not want to be quoted right away (Bird, 1990). But if one is persistent, can usually come up with that 'good money quote' unless the whole story is just absolutely wrong and then there is no place to go (Ongowo, 2011). Moreover, tabloid journalists are the first to agree that they use formulaic story styles, gathering quotes, fact, and so on to construct a story with the intended structural content (Mapuzi, 2009; Bird, 1990).

In my case, I dealt with a high spectrum of evidence from interviews to establish the state of knowledge (Simon, 1985). On the underside of dealing with high spectrum of information, some scholars claim that it makes the presentation often sloppy with no scientific rigor (Yin, 1994). In counteracting this assertion, I spent a lot of time eliminating repetitions, which was emotionally and physically tiring. Besides, Wimmer and Dominick (2006) point out that good skill is essential in cleaning data as a lot of materials can be collected from the fieldwork.

Throughout in-depth interviews, I discovered causal relations between press freedom, professional practice of journalism, and the political dynamics. Causal relations provided new insights in Chapters Five, Six and Seven and raised questions about what one can say about the findings and whether it is merely to produce an account from an external point of view that may even contradict the views of the tabloid journalists involved, or just give them uncritical platform as respondents (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In my study, I gave tabloid journalists a critical platform as presented in the findings in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

As already signalled, I gathered a lot of information from interviews but the problem was in re-arranging findings to make logical conclusions (Iorio, 2004). However, causal relations from the interviews data made it easy to establish some of the issues that hindered press

freedom (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that in the field, it becomes easier to identify causal relations. In my case, during my pilot fieldwork (2010-2011), I discovered that the the tabloid relentlessly criticised the government. But in 2012, it was an ardent supporter of government. This political positioning affected its professional practice of journalism. I have touched on this issue in considerable detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Another issue I dealt with was on countering the criticism that case-studies fail to provide basis for generalisation (Milena *et al.*, 2008). In countering this criticism, I drew insights from Bent (2006) using Karl Popper's falsification test. He notes that if 'all swans are white,' then just one case-study that reveals 'one single black swan' would falsify this proposition leading to general conclusion that not all swans are white. In this context, therefore, case-studies can have general significance that can stimulate further investigation. In my study, even though it was contextually situated, it provided both particular and general conclusions to tabloid journalism and press freedom within an emerging democracy. As already signalled, Bent (2006) argues that case-studies are well suited for identifying 'black swans' because of their in-depth approach as often what appears 'white' often turns out to be 'black' on closer examination. For example, in my fieldwork, I discovered complex issues within journalism practice which were not evident before embarking on this study as I have demonstrated in Chapter Five and Six.

Generally, some scholars claim that tabloids often attempt to set the political agenda at the expense of the general citizens (Manne, 2011). Similarly, my research showed that in emerging democracies, the tabloids were often accused of riding of the back of the ignorant citizen to drive their own selfish agenda (Amsterdam, 2012; Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2010). In this regard, Stake (1994) suggests that even though the goal of case-studies is not to generalise findings but to obtain an in-depth understanding of the particular case, at times, case-studies can be generalised to theoretical propositions (Iorio, 2004).

Therefore, my general conclusion in Chapter Seven was epistemologically in harmony with many readers' experiences especially those living in emerging democracies and thus, a natural basis for generalization (Gomm *et al.*, 2000). In fact, it was directed towards analytical and not empirical generalization and involved logical rather than statistical inferences (Yin, 1994). In addition, it illuminated many readers on the political and social dynamics of tabloid journalism practice within an emerging democracy (Gluckman, 1961).

### **3.2. Research questions**

It was not easy for me to develop the research questions and much depended on the experience as a tabloid journalist and having knowledge of the Zambian context. I was also particularly interested in understanding how my respondents articulated their meaning of press freedom and factor that impacted on their professional practice within an emerging democracy. I also looked at the main roles of tabloid journalists as defined by themselves and the legal and political pressures in the environment they operated. I was also keen, to find out how such pressures frustrated and liberated their work. Another issue I looked at was on whether there were ways regulation of journalism practice worked well in relation to press freedom and to the maturity of democracy. I was in addition, interested in the professional dynamics and challenges and whether there were news items that they considered best practice in tabloid journalism. Moreover, I also looked at whether the respondents saw any ways by which the press could make progress in professionalism. All my responses to these questions were presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

I formulated research questions to give tabloid journalists a platform as much as possible. Generally, any research study should be based on few questions (Gomm *et al.*, 2000). Similarly, I used few research questions by relying on literature review in Chapter One to identify issues and to gain precision (Iorio, 2004). I kept modifying the research questions as new evidence emerged, a process Partlett and Hamilton (1976) called progressive focusing and resembled a journalist who started out his or her investigation for a given topic with a preliminary idea of what it entailed, but upon researching it in greater detail, came to realise



that it contained other, more significant issues than originally anticipated and this was my case (Iorio, 2004:61).

In fact, my initial aim was to investigate *The Post's* professional practices. As new evidence emerged, I looked at the legal and political interactions and their impact on press freedom within the broader context of an emerging democracy. There was also need to assess how tabloid journalists worked and the need to identify signs of hope for the future of the independent press. In addition, there was also sufficient literature and evidence to suggest that *The Post* journalists were often victims of legal and political processes, which required further research questions to bring about a better understanding of debates on press freedom and professional practice within an emerging democracy.

I interviewed my respondents by simplifying research questions since their first language was not English (Lisa, 2006). I also avoided ambiguous questions with more than one possible interpretation as they were often confusing when mistakenly used (Deacon *et al.*, 1999). I only used short and crisp research questions. I also avoided leading questions in order not to manipulate the respondents to provide particular answers. Furthermore, I avoided double and triple questions as they were an informal fallacy that touch on more than one issue and yet allow only one answer. In addition, answers to such questions are difficult to analyse as respondents answers never indicate which questions are being answered. The other questions I avoided were those hypothetical in nature and which assumes future circumstances. Even though I asked these questions out of interest regarding how tabloid journalists saw tabloid journalism profession developing in the future, they are unreliable predictors of future behaviour. This was not because people lie, but because it was difficult to predict what actions will be before an event occurs (Deacon *et al.*, 1999:75).

Throughout my questioning, I used open-ended questions despite the criticisms that they place too much demand on respondents unlike closed questions with fixed responses for respondents to select (Mack *et al.*, 2005:14). I opted for open-ended questions because they did not undermine the rapport and never imposed inappropriate restricted framework on

respondents. They also removed the possibility that certain types of responses were being prompted by the response option offer (Deacon *et al.*, 1999:79). In fact, my open-ended questions gave participants an opportunity to respond in their own words and evoked unanticipated responses which i cherished (Mack *et al.*, 2005:5). I used open-ended questions because they allowed me the flexibility to probe the respondents and they encouraged elaborate answers. Generally, the focus of my questions as noted by Hallaway (1997:57), was to generate information grounded in real-life issues. Similarly, Krosnick and Presser (2009:59) argue that good research questions provide efficiency to the findings as presented in Chapter Five, Six and Seven.

### **3.3. Data collection**

My data collection exercise commenced after the research questions were sharpened. Initially, I took a case-study-protocol and a pilot-study to strengthen the reliability and validity of research findings. A case-study-protocol involved identifying the potential respondents and gathering information about them (Iorio, 2004:62-63). I discovered that there were so many tabloid journalists who worked for *The Post* before and some were still in the country while others were in other parts of the world. I first got in touch with a former tabloid journalist pseudonamed John Kaputo who gave me details and contact information of other respondents. These contacts were very vital during fieldwork and made my work easy to some extent (Lisa, 2006).

In the pilot-study, I took a snap-shot research of *The Post* prior to data collection and conducted regular visits to Zambia in order to familiarise with the state of affairs. The pilot-study was on 'media practice and censorship' which was later published by the University of Indiana Press in the *Africa Today Journal* (Chama, 2012).

### ***Information sources***

Sources of information came from literature review and in-depth interviews in order to provide more insights on *The Post* (Gomm *et al.*, 2000). Information sources helped me to develop what Yin (1994:34) calls “convergent line of inquiry”, meaning that any fact or conclusion pertaining to the study is likely to be more convincing or accurate if it is supported with different sources of information. I used convergent line of inquiry to help address potential problems of validity. I used multiple sources of information such as archive materials, the Internet sources, library books, journals, periodicals, in-depth interviews and newspapers which provided multiple measures of the findings in Chapter Five and Six.

In fact, multiple sources of information or data source triangulation are a common tabloid journalistic practice whereby tabloid journalists attempt to corroborate the views expressed by certain sources of information by consulting other sources (Bird, 1990). Generally, varieties of sources provide good basis and empirically grounded conclusions (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). I related views that were expressed during in-depth interviews to the information that emerged from the literature sources. My convergent line of inquiry was intended to guarantee validity and reliability of my findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

### ***Primary sources***

Primary sources of information through interviews provided first hand testimony from my respondents (Iorio, 2004). My interview style was inspired by Deuze (2005) who interviewed tabloid journalists for the study on popular culture. For example, in order to determine who to interview, I targeted tabloid journalists who reported on political affairs. As already signalled, my primary data collection style was similar to Deuze’s (2002) approach of tabloid journalists’ perceptions of their profession in relation to the broader understanding of journalism. In my case, I was particularly interested in tabloid journalists’ work within the political context of press freedom and how they perceived their responsibilities in the building

of an emerging democracy and in the playing of a watchdog role over government accountability.

**(a) *In-depth interviews***

It was not easy for me to come up with a number of respondents whom to interview. Initially, I was looking at interviewing only tabloid journalists that were no longer working for *The Post*. Later on, I realised that this would have affected the validity of my findings. I then incorporated interviews for tabloid journalists that were still employed (2011-2012) in order to have a feel of what was transpiring at the newspaper.

I also looked at various literature sources regarding the number of respondents that can be interviewed in small case-studies such as mine in order to guarantee the validity of the findings. I noted that there was no specific number of respondents that could be interviewed to guarantee validity but that it depended on the size of the case under investigation (Kvale, 1996). In my case, *The Post* was a very small case with less than twenty political reporters (Mungonge, 2007). Therefore, my initial intention was to interview twelve respondents. But when I was in the field, I managed to stop at eleven respondents when the same information started to repeat itself. Among the twelve I initially selected, there were four editors (two were employed at the time of my research and the other two were no longer working for the tabloid) and eight reporters (four were employed while the other four were not working for the tabloid at the time of my research). However, finally I managed to interview three editors (two were no longer working for the tabloid) and eight reporters (four were employed at the time of my research and four were no longer working for the tabloid).

My interviews generated a lot of information from structured and unstructured conversations on values, motivations, experiences, feelings, including non-verbal responses (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). They provided a glimpse into journalists' personal lives and were a good technique to elicit a vivid picture of their perspectives (Mack *et al.*, 2005:29). Overall, my

interviewing techniques were motivated by the desire to learn everything respondents shared with me.

Interviews provided a wealth of information as I probed respondents carefully in their individual personalities (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I extracted the rich information using my experience and skills (Krosnick & Presser, 2009). I used my interviewing skills carefully by beginning with an introduction to re-assure respondents of research legitimacy (Deacon *et al.*, 1999). The introductory stage was important as many respondents I met were total strangers who needed assurance before the interviews (Kvale, 1996).

At times I conducted interviews at Manda Hill Shopping Mall while having a meal, at other times I was at News Café having a drink. There were times interviews were conducted at the workplace and at times in the restaurant. These interviews were like starting a relationship where one was expected not to get too personal if the intention was to win the trust of the other (Kvale, 1996). In normal circumstances, a relationship “is to be given time to develop. You can’t get too close too soon. Even though these have committed to do interviews, they don’t know what they have committed to, so you have to easy into a relationship and the interviewing: In establishing a relationship you walk a fine line” (Iorio, 2004:17).

In my case, I contacted many respondents who were mainly strangers. We introduced each other, and talked about different things before going into an interview session. All interviews were an ‘artificial interaction’ and I did not treat respondents talk as factual accounts. This was because there is often a gap between ‘what people do’ and ‘what they say they do’ (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006; Kvale, 1996). Therefore, I structured carefully their talk as well as what they said they were doing as shown in Chapters Five and Six.

During the interview sessions, I started with easy and general questions to make my respondents to relax (Deacon *et al.*, 1999). Complex questions came at last when the mind was settled to remember details properly. I thanked the respondents after each interview session and offered them an invitation to provide any further comments. In my approach, I

initially targeted the more willing respondents before those who were reluctant to take part (Iorio, 2004).

I explored respondents' views using simple terminologies in order to yield relevant information (Lisa, 2006). Actually, I broke down difficult terms for my respondents to comprehend more easily. My interview sessions were also audio recorded while at the same time, notes were taken for accurateness (Kvale, 1996). Many respondents were not very comfortable with the recording of interviews but I assured them (Iorio, 2004:17). I also discovered that note-taking alone was simply not up to the task. For example, the longer the interview lasted, the more the note-taking missed some points. Therefore, recording allowed me to focus my attention and to listen to what my respondents were saying, to think ahead to the next question, and to formulate unexpected question rapidly. Furthermore, recording also helped me to pick up what the notes missed and to quote more accurately (Iorio, 2004:99).

Recorded information was later downloaded onto my laptop and memory stick and then was transcribed. Generally, transcribing information immediately after interviews is recommended because of the deteriorating quality of many recorders but is not always required (Ritchie, 1995). I used the audio recorder with the recording space of 500 hours. There was also sufficient supply of batteries and I monitored the audio recorder during each session (Iorio, 2004). Ideally, the interview should flow like a conversation and end naturally but this was not always the case (Mack *et al.*, 2005:34). At times I saw signs of impatience, annoyance, and boredom from some respondents – these were cues that reminded me to be more engaging or wrap up the interview.

Even though there was an interview guide, I did not follow it sequentially as this depended on interview climate. Some respondents were not willing to talk about some subjects in detail. For example, Audrey Muma (interviewee) was not willing to talk about the owner's influence in the newsroom and diary meetings despite my several attempts to convince her that my research was only for academic purpose and her identity was to remain anonymous.

However, I made sure that each session lasted approximately two hours (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). But some sessions lasted more than two hours, I remember one session with Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee), which lasted six hours at Arcades Shopping Mall. Another session with Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) lasted five hours at Parliament Motel. There is generally no specific number of hours an interview session should last as “some people have more to contribute than others (Iorio, 2004:101). On average, “in-depth interviews sessions should last from one to two hours” (Mack *et al.*, 2005:34). I made sure that I spent sufficient time with respondents making sure that all set questions were covered. In addition, I recorded the start and the end times of each interview session in my note book. In fact, there were interview sessions I enjoyed very much which left fond memories. Some interview sessions were very tense and volatile at times. There were other interviews sessions which ended abruptly for various reasons. But in all the interviews I conducted in the field, I was satisfied with the information I collected.

**(b) Sampling procedure**

Tabloid journalists were sampled from those who worked at *The Post* at the time of research (2010-2013) and those that had left. Sampling is concerned with the selection of individuals from the case in order to yield some knowledge about the whole (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). My main reason for sampling was to cut down on financial costs as data collection was faster because the data set was smaller (Ader *et al.*, 2008). I chose the purposive sampling procedure instead of random sampling because of time and financial constraints. I carefully selected tabloid journalists as representatives of *The Post* (Iorio, 2004:96). As already noted, my sample size was very small because *The Post* was a small publication (Deacon *et al.*, 1999). I was also aware that purposive sampling gave some respondents no chance of selection referred to as ‘out of coverage’ (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). But I selected usually respondents based on their qualities (Tongco & Dolores, 2007) and willingness to provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002).

I first selected influential and willing respondents who later persuaded others to cooperate. Asking sources to recommend others who could be sources is known as snowball sampling (Kvale, 1996). In fact, it was much easier for me to start with the most willing respondents and work towards those more reluctant (Iorio, 2004:97). In “snowballing, also known as chain referral sampling, participants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate or contribute to the study” (Mack *et al.*, 2005:7). But since *The Post* was a very small case, the sample size was also very small and selected more informally and carefully (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

I used the rule of the thumb to know when to stop collecting information by merely looking at repeatability of responses (Iorio, 2004:97). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that information gathering stops when new evidence stops to emerge which can be reached even after twelve participants. Similarly, Condit (1989) suggests that some case studies do not even seek saturation point and cite the study of limits of audience power in decoding texts which sampled only two students selected on the basis of their strong contrasting views on abortion and made similar readings of the intended message. But still, in other case studies, sample sizes can range anywhere from ‘two to three’ to ‘more than 100’ depending on what is studied (Hoopes, 1979).

As already signalled, I identified and interviewed respondents based on their willingness, knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002). The rationale for the choice of my respondents was justified on the premise that employed respondents were not eager to be interviewed while those no longer employed by *The Post* were more willing to share their experiences. All respondents, except two whose materials were available online (2010-2013), declined to be identified.



## **Secondary sources**

Secondary sources were used to acquire a broader overview on my subject area and this was research that was performed by others within my subject area and their conclusion (Iorio, 2004:222). I used journals, books, newspapers, and Internet sources as interpretational materials in order to establish the state of knowledge at the time of my research (Kvale, 1996). I also utilised secondary sources that particularly focused on press freedom, professional practices, and the interface of politics and law within the broader context of an emerging democracy. Secondary sources on tabloid press, especially that which cited *The Post*, were targeted in considerable depth. The collection of secondary information also stopped at saturation point when the same information started to emerge repeatedly from the documents (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006).

For example, at *The Post* library, I looked at the various copies of the tabloid and analysed the level of reporting especially with regard to exposing corruption scandals and in carrying out the watchdog journalism which was vital for the maturity of democracy. I targeted a variety of copies and editions to understand press freedom and factors that hindered journalists' role in their professional practice within an emerging democracy. I also analysed various stories in order to understand the political dynamics under which the tabloid journalists operated. I looked at various headlines and made decisions and judgement on stories that provided more depth for analysis and reflection for the next Chapter.

I used content analysis of the tabloid stories and headlines on corruption which I then broke down into sets of categories for selection as presented in the next Chapter. For example, Wimmer and Dominick (2006:149) define content analysis as a method to analyse communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner in order to measure variables which was my case. In the next Chapter, I present some of the stories that emerged from content analysis in order to provide more insights on tabloid journalism practice and its impact within the context of an emerging democracy.

In fact, to develop the next Chapter, I first selected purposively 200 tabloid copies and editions with first page headlines on corruption issues that spread from 1991 to 2012 as follows: 50 copies of *Weekly Post*, 50 copies of *Sunday Post*, 50 copies of *Saturday Post*, and 50 copies of *The Post*. I specifically tracked stories with more objective and detailed patterns of corruption and their impact on press freedom and on the maturity of democracy. Finally, I purposively selected three stories on 'Copper shipment scandal exposed,' 'GBM solicits ZESCO poles contracts' and 'Harrington urges thorough revaluation of Zamtel sale'. These stories were more detailed and were reported for more than six months as presented in the next Chapter.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

I subjected data from literature sources and from interview sessions to analysis and interpretation (Iorio, 2004:6). I started by inspecting, cleaning, and transforming data with the goal of highlighting useful information. I cleaned notes from interviews, audio recordings and transcripts from the archive (Ader *et al.*, 2008). I commenced data analysis after returning from fieldwork. Generally, there is no commonly agreed method of analysing data and when it ought to commence (Iorio, 2004:65). I typed data from summary notes, audio recordings, and archive summaries using Microsoft Word because of its advantages in data analysis, deleting, editing, storing, searching, retrieving, and in linking data segments.

My data analysis exercise involved closely looking at data and identifying similarities and differences. I also looked at patterns within data and matched them while building explanations (Yin, 1994). I used pattern matching by looking at data from respondents and classified it in themes and categories. I then used deductive reasoning after comparing empirical evidence from the field to theoretical literature in Chapters One, Two and Four in order to establish conclusions in Chapter Seven (Iorio, 2004:66).

I approached data analysis exercise using Yin's (1994) three principles. Firstly, my analysis shows that I relied on all the relevant evidence from literature sources and interviews.

Secondly, my analysis includes all major explanations and scholarly debates on the broader context, and then in Africa and then particularly in Zambia. Thirdly, my analysis uses deductive and inductive reasoning to arrive at its conclusions in Chapter Seven (Yin, 1994:123-124).

During data analysis, I re-visited the research questions and assessed how they were informed by both empirical and theoretical evidence (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006). After breaking down the data to isolate similarities and differences, the data was then re-assembled to form themes (Holloway, 1997). The themes highlighted findings systematically in a process of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After displaying the data, I was able to closely examine key elements of thoughts and feelings in the respondents' own words (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I presented some segments of responses in Chapters Five, Six and Seven to overcome the criticism that there is too much data reduction during data analysis which fails to recognise the whole story (Punch, 2001).

My focus during data analysis was to comprehend logically the overall narrative in a movement from particular to general (McCracken, 1998). My data analysis was time-consuming because a lot of information was assessed carefully and then presented sensibly (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). I spent a lot of time reading through the raw data on transcripts and listening from the recorded information in order to highlight relevant areas of information within data. I also used the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) in identifying themes from the data.

### **3.5. Case-study report**

In scholarly debates, there is no agreed method of research report organisation (Iorio, 2004). But many scholars agree on the need to share fieldwork notes with participants during report writing; a procedure known as member checking (Iorio, 2004; Gillham, 2000; Yin, 1994). In my case, I shared my final draft with all my respondents in order to get their final comments. Some respondents were not happy with certain information and requested to be deleted.

Some other respondents further provided more information to add on what they shared during interviews. My goal for member checking was to capture the case accurately (Iorio, 2004). It was also important for respondents to examine the final draft of their words in order to validate facts and evidence in the report. Thus, from a methodological perspective, the corrections made through member checking enhanced the accuracy of the study and increased the construct validity (Yin, 1994:144-146). Interestingly, member checking is at odds with mainstream research ideals of independence, which argue that the form and content should be determined by the investigator rather than the sources of information (Iorio, 2004). But I felt that member checking was necessary in order to protect respondents from future harm after volunteering to participate (Ader *et al.*, 2008).

Therefore, I wrote this report with parallels of contemporary reporting genres. I organised my report in the form of; introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion (Iorio, 2004:68). In my report writing, I used analytic and reflective formats to make the report alive while mirroring common journalistic distinction between hard news and feature writing. For example, in the hard news writing, the story is told from the vintage point of a disembodied writer while in the feature writing, the writer is positioned as a central element of the story. I interwove these writing formats into my report writing style throughout all the Chapters.

My analytic and reflective writing styles resemble what Whittrock (1986) calls particular description, general description, and interpretive commentary. For example, I used particular description by presenting insights from respondents, then general description by linking insights from general dataset, and interpretive commentary by explaining the data. I also organized my report in order to allow readers' to engage in what Stake (1994) calls naturalistic generalisation intended to resonate with their own personal experiences. In fact, while journalists typically emphasize particular and general description in their reporting, they often do not include enough of interpretive commentary. In scholarly literature on journalism, this neglect is commonly referred to as a lack of context which was not my case

(Iorio, 2004:68-69). My report incorporated particular and general description and was accompanied by interpretative commentaries from scholarly debates (Berg, 2004).

### **3.6. Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues that were encountered were on the treatment of my respondents. I was very much concerned with their safety and the impact of this research on their professions and their lives once the findings are made public. This was because the owner of the tabloid was very influential and highly connected within the legal and political system as pointed out in Chapters Five and Six. Generally, in any research involving human subjects, there is need to consider seriously issues that relate to their protection (Berg, 2004). In fact, the lack of protection to human subjects as participants reflects poorly on a research study (Frey *et al.*, 2000).

The protection of respondents shielded them from possible harm and ensured their freedom from exploitation. One of the ways I ensured that they were not merely used as means to achieve my research objectives was to share my findings with them. Many scholars claim that those who take on the burdens of research participation should share in the benefits of the knowledge gained. Or, to put it in another way, the people who are expected to benefit from the knowledge should be the ones who are asked to participate (Mack *et al.*, 2005:11).

In this study, I asked respondents to voluntarily participate even though I was aware that strict applications of ethical codes like voluntary consent and informed consent could make the research role simply untenable (Punch, 1994:90). For example, the need to sign the consent form by my participants prevented some of them from taking part in the research inquiry (Sellitz *et al.* 1976). But still, I interviewed only respondents based on their voluntary willingness and I explained the project clearly and in detail.

Similarly, Mack *et al.* (2005:8) note that typically, formal informed consent is necessary for all qualitative research methods, regardless of the sampling method used to identify

potential participants and the strategies used to recruit them. In my case, I used a written informed consent [Appendix A] which was approved by the ethics committee under which my study was registered. The informed consent form ensured that my respondents were well informed and that they made independent decisions regarding their participation, and that they were free to withdraw (Korchin & Cowan, 1982).

But still, as I have already noted, some respondents withdrew from participating after providing them with necessary information. It was very frustrating but it was also necessary to be honest about my study. In fact, the informed consent ensured that the respondents understood what it meant to participate and made conscious and deliberate decisions. My provision of information to participants in advance ensured respect and honesty (Mack *et al.*, 2005:11).

There were times informed consent presented what appeared to be a breach of confidentiality. For example, when I promised anonymity to respondents as an inducement for participation, they became suspicious when I requested them to sign the informed consent form before interviews (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). I sometimes took it that the fact that they agreed to participate was taken to imply consent. But scholars claim that often as a general rule, the greater the risks of potential harm to the respondent, the greater the need to obtain a signed informed consent statement (Mack *et al.*, 2005).

Interestingly, many of my respondents were not willing to sign the consent form and it was often wrongly interpreted. Deciding which information to give to participants to make an intelligent decision was very difficult too (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). After providing information, some respondents even questioned the motive behind the study and who funded it. Obviously all information can have reasonable influence on participants depending on its packaging. But I was very honest about the study and I did not use deception in order to obtain participants' cooperation (Mack *et al.*, 2005:31).

I explained clearly to participants about the aims and objectives of the study. Even though there are conditions under which deception is considered ethical in some social science research especially in exposing corruption, but I did not want to deceive any one in order to access information (Lisa, 2006). I considered the use of deception to access information from participants unethical. Besides, most scholars agree that the rights of subjects take precedence and should guide one's moral calculation (Iorio, 2004:133). All my participants were given sufficient information about my study and its purpose; what was expected of a research participant, the amount of time for participation, and that one could withdraw at any time (Ader *et al.*, 2008).

I also explained to the respondents regarding people who were to access the materials they provided after publication of the research findings. In fact, preservation of confidentiality was important as it provided safeguards against invasion of privacy (Iorio, 2004). For example, participants were assured that information discussed during in-depth interviews remained private. There was no participant who raised concerns about the study that I could not address (Lisa, 2006). I explained to participants the issues of confidentiality in considerable depth (Ader *et al.*, 2008). In addition, I also adhered to confidentiality commitment by ensuring that during interviews and in casual conversation before or afterwards, I was very careful not to make incidental comments about other people that I already interviewed to avoid creating an impression that I could not be trusted (Mack *et al.*, 2005:31-32). In fact, all my respondents were not aware of other participants who were interviewed.

There is also a strong feeling among fieldworkers that the respondents should not be identifiable in print and that they should not suffer harm or embarrassment as a consequence of research" (Punch, 1994:92). Therefore, I ensured that participants' right to privacy was respected through the use of pseudo-names. Besides, those who withdrew and wished certain information to be deleted were respected by removing the information from the data set in Chapters Five and Six. In addition, all the literature sources that were consulted too were acknowledged through proper citation and referencing. This was intended to respect the intellectual properties of others. Finally, all the information collected

from the participants in the field was also a true reflection of the data (Mack *et al.*, 2005:9). I also checked all the information several times to ensure research accuracy (Iorio, 2004).

### **3.7. Research limitations**

There were few limitations that were encountered for this study. Some participants blatantly refused the interview after they offered to participate months before fieldwork. The refusal to cooperate is referred to as 'non-response' whereby respondents become suspicious. Generally, when 'non-response' is deliberate, respondents completely refuse to participate. In my case, some respondents chose to answer that they do not want to participate without giving any reasons. Obviously 'non-response' can have serious implications on the study and its findings which was not my case (Deacon *et al.*, 1999).

For example, the owner Fred Mmembe cancelled the appointments on several occasions despite giving me access to use the library. I should stress here that before 2011, *The Post* was always under politically motivated investigations by government to water-down its progressive reporting (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996). The situation made its journalists uncomfortable with individuals and groups that attempted to carry out studies on its operations. Despite making provisional arrangements with purposively selected participants accompanied by an introduction letter from the institution where the study was registered, it did not help much to convince some and lower their level of suspicion.

My data collection exercise in the field lasted only six months because of time constraint. Some participants did not want to provide sufficient information. But this did not compromise validity of research findings because those that provided information had similar issues that emerged repeatedly. Financial constraint was another limitation that affected this study. My research was externally funded for three years. Therefore, I was under pressure to complete it within the time frame. Extra expenses like fieldwork research were not covered. I personally funded other expenses making the study to be carried out within available financial resources. My research methodology was consistent with available resources.



### **3.8. Study time frame**

My research study took an average of three years from 2010 to 2013. From October 2010 to June 2011, I worked on sharpening the research project, developing research questions, and developing ethics forms. In the same period, I developed one Chapter on introduction and literature review. From July 2011 to September 2011, I worked on the Chapter on '*The Post*'. Furthermore, from September 2011 to November 2011, I worked on the Chapter on 'research methodology and techniques' and prepared for my fieldwork. The period from December 2011 to June 2012 was spent on the field doing data collection. During the same time, I made several trips to meet participants and to finalise the data collection process. The period from July 2012 to October 2013 was dedicated to data analysis and interpretation of research findings. During the same period, I wrote the final report, and made final revision. The same period was dedicated to binding the entire document and submission of the final report.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

The goal of any research methodology is to get as complete as possible a better understanding of what is being studied. The Chapter explored how the study was conducted and how the methodology helped to develop valuable insights into the critical issues that were at the centre of investigations (Mack *et al.*, 2005:1). I selected a methodology that was contextually oriented within the interface of democracy, tabloidization, and professional practices. It was important for this research to be conducted and reported so that its logical argument could carefully be examined and understood (Smith, 1981:585).

The main issues that emerged in the Chapter are that the research methodology should be well positioned to provide detailed insights into a phenomenon under investigation. In addition, the research questions ought to be formulated and modified as research progresses because new evidence tend to emerge, and open ended questions tend to generate detailed information.

Furthermore, the sampling procedures depend on what is studied and purposive sampling method identifies respondents based on knowledge and experience related to the study. Moreover, there is no universally agreed way of collecting and analysing data except general principles. Another issue is that the research report writing can either be reflective or analytical depending on the style and resembles either hard news or feature writing. In addition, the ethical consideration dealt with the treatment of participants and their protection was very important. The other issue was that the limitations to this study were on financial resources and time frame. Overall, my research methodology was consistent with time and finances.

My next Chapter presents the research findings from *The Post* editions selected using purposive sampling and content analysis (1991-2012) and highlights three major stories entitled 'Copper shipment scandal exposed,' 'GBM solicits ZESCO poles contracts' and 'Harrington urges thorough revaluation of Zamtel sale' to show some of the roles of tabloid journalists in going at length to play a watchdog function over government authorities within emerging democracies. In fact, the status of the next Chapter is to provide a better understanding of the tabloid stories within the broader context of press freedom and democracy. I position the following Chapter to help readers understand contextually the interviewee insights in Chapter Five and Six and to ensure that they properly get informed by the thesis's central argument and conclusion in Chapter Seven.

## Chapter IV

### Context of research: *The Post* and muckraking journalism

This Chapter is on *The Post* and its 'muckraking' form of journalism and provides background insights to Chapters Five and Six. It emerged through investigatory stories that were compiled during my content analysis of the tabloid editions (1991-2012) during my fieldwork (2011-2012). The purpose of this Chapter is to offer insights on the investigatory nature of the tabloid within an emerging democracy. It is also intended to provide more information on the political culture of the authorities in the management of public funds which impact on press freedom and on the emerging democracy. The issues highlighted in this Chapter are crucial to understanding the context and the background under which the respondents argues from in the next two Chapters.

#### 4.0. Introduction

Press freedom in an emerging democracy is often measured by the extent by which journalists hold authorities to account in the way that they manage public resources (Ongowo, 2011; Kasoma, 1994; Ogbondah, 1994; Phiri, 1999; Lungu, 1986). For example, *The Post* was often credited for exposing fraud, embezzlement, mismanagement of public funds, and careless waste of donor funding through its muckraking form of journalism within the broader context of press freedom (Banda, 2007; Makungu, 2004; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996).

In this Chapter, I analyse the political influence of tabloid journalism through muckraking as an important dimension of press freedom and at the centre of *The Post*. Generally, muckraking is a form of journalism practice in which investigative journalists unearth information which would have remained hidden from the public domain (Ongowo, 2011). In tabloid journalism, muckraking is often done through secretive investigations by journalists

then the information is exposed through sensation language, pictures and headlines which easily evoke emotions and attract public outcry (Phiri, 1999).

The stories I present in this Chapter exposed financial mismanagement in government operations and also corruption within the broader context of press freedom and in an emerging democracy. I should also note here that democracy depends on an informed electorate, and through sensation journalism, *The Post* was able to contribute to the culture of public scrutiny of the government machineries (Banda, 2007). In fact, the tabloid was a critical platform that contributed to the exposure of corruption and theft in public institutions by authorities who were entrusted to hold positions on behalf of citizens within an emerging democracy (Phiri, 2008).

Through investigative journalism, *The Post* exposed unethical, immoral and illegal behaviour by government officials, politicians, as well as private citizens (Banda, 2007). This form of journalism makes a worthwhile contribution to society by drawing attention to failures within society's systems and to the ways in which those systems can be circumvented by the rich, the powerful, and the corrupt (Ongowo, 2011). In fact, investigative reporting not only demands the highest standards of accuracy, but also delivers more ethical dilemmas on a daily basis than almost any other form of journalism practice (Houston, 2009:108).

Therefore, *The Post* (1991-2011) played a critical role in an emerging democracy by providing information to the general public on government spending (Banda, 2007). It also exposed financial mismanagement and many perpetrators ended up convicted (Phiri, 2008). Besides, as already argued in detail, the tabloid shifted its allegiance during the period of my research which affected its investigatory abilities. This is crucial, for the role of the tabloid journalist is integrally bound to the role of exposure and perhaps, in some of its less desirable forms, to muckraking.

However, in this Chapter, I only highlight investigatory campaigns which were particularly impressive for their investigatory rigour. The stories are crucial in discussing the role of

tabloid journalism within an emerging democracy and in the exposure of information through muckraking form of journalism (Phiri, 2008).

As already signalled, the status of this Chapter is to provide a more practical understanding of journalists' role within the broader context of press freedom within an emerging democracy in which *The Post* operated. In fact, the stories sampled in this Chapter came from newspaper editions (1991-2012) that exposed corruption in government operations. As already noted in the methodology Chapter, I sampled many stories that were spread over a period (1991-2012) of time and looked at different headlines.

I specifically tracked more objective and detailed patterns of corruption stories. Finally, I came up with three major stories presented in this Chapter starting with the 'Copper shipment scandal exposed,' published in 1991 (Mwinga, 1991), then the 'GBM solicits ZESCO poles contracts' published in 2012 (Kalaluka, 2012) and finally the 'Harrington urges thorough revaluation of Zamtel sale' published in 2009 (Mzyece, 2009). I selected these stories on the premise that they were reported for more than six months. In addition, they were more detailed in their investigatory character and exemplarily in their objectivity. Besides, these stories were also of best tabloid journalism practice in the periods in which they were reported (Kalaluka, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Chirwa, 1996).

#### **4.1. Copper shipment scandal exposed**

*The Post* exposed the copper shipment scandal in July 1991 which resulted in major investigations by the government (Mwinga, 1991). Even though the stories lacked depth, and in some cases major details were missing, they shed light on the world of corrupt government officials (Banda, 2007). On July 26, 1991, the tabloid exposed top public officials that were implicated in a million dollar swindle that involved the shipment of copper abroad. At the time, copper was the lifeblood of the country's economy (Phiri, 1999).

*The Post* exposed how copper was traded by the state-run Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines and how tens of millions of dollars' worth of copper earnings was swindled by a group of top ranking government officials (Donge, 2008). Copper revenue swindling took place over the period of several years. Metal Marketing Corporation, a government organisation was a major player in the transactions that involved copper shipments through South Africa's Marcol a 'briefcase company'. The company was set up by some government officials to inflate freight charges on copper shipments (Mwinga, 1991).

In fact, many of the scandals that were exposed by the tabloid often came from tips and sources. For example, Phiri (2008), as already noted in the previous discussions, provides a similar investigatory story that led to the exposure of Lands Minister Gladys Nyorongo over the abuse of authority to allocate government land to her husband and children arguing that initial information tips came from 'reliable' sources. Therefore, sources were instrumental in the fashioning and exposure of the copper shipment scandal by the tabloid journalists (Ongowo, 2011).

*The Post* further revealed that Metal Marketing Corporation used Marcol as an irregular broker on all copper shipments. Proceeds from the scam were then deposited in a Brussels based Bank in Belgium (Donge, 2008). In fact, Marcol was contracted to handle shipments of over one million tonnes over five years (Mwinga, 1991). Senior public officials were heavily connected in the corruption racket and were paying inflated freight charges for copper exports to Marcol; their joint company which was based in Johannesburg, South Africa (Phiri, 1999). The joint company made at least US\$ 20 million over five years and was holding an average of 250, 000 tonnes of copper annually. Proceeds from the copper scam were shared among government officials in Zambia and in South Africa through an account in Belgium (Mwinga, 1991).

My analysis of news articles further revealed that it was very common for corrupt government officials to use European accounts for corrupt business transactions (Phiri, 2008). For example, Banda (2007) explains how *The Post* exposed President Frederick

Chiluba's (1991-2001) externalising of public funds in Switzerland and in an offshore account in the Bahamas. Generally, stories I selected heavily highlighted corruption and were important as a political aspect of investigatory journalism (Ongowo, 2011). In addition, the stories demonstrated ways by which the tabloid importantly and rigorously detailed the corruption scandals. For example, during the trial of former President Frederick Chiluba (2002-2008), *The Post* exposed the accounts in Britain which run in millions of dollars which were only known by his inner political circle (Donge, 2008).

*The Post* further revealed that in the copper shipment scandal, Sea-cargo, a company formed jointly with Metal Marketing Corporation, was given absolute power by government to place cargos outside the conference line arrangement with whatever ship-over operator or broker it chose (Mwinga, 1991). In fact, the firm used its absolute discretion to appoint Marcol to sub-contract the shipment of millions of tonnes of copper (Donge, 2008). In the shipment racket, whenever shipment of copper was required, Sea-cargo requested Marcol to provide freight and a vessel. Marcol then floated shipment to other brokers and ship operators to find a vessel and offer a rate (Phiri, 2008).

During my content analysis, I was very surprised to see more than 200 detailed stories of corruption scandals that were exposed by *The Post* from 1991 (Phiri, 2008; Donge, 2008; Banda, 2007; Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996). I was led to believe that the culture of stealing by public authorities was widespread within an emerging democracy (Katulwende, 2009). In fact, this Chapter highlights a key role of *The Post* in exposing malpractice – something for which the tabloid is not often given due credit (Ongowo, 2011).

For example, *The Post* further gave one instance of dubious dealings between Sea-cargo and Marcol which involved the shipment in May 1987 of 9,004 tonnes of copper in which Metal Marketing Corporation paid US\$ 11.68 more per tonne to Marcol than the standard rate (Mwinga, 1991). *The Post* talked to some insiders who questioned the reasons behind hiring Marcol arguing it reflected either a lack of shipping expertise or 'a conspiracy to steal' (Donge, 2008).

Insiders further revealed that the efforts to break the arrangement with Marcol which was neither a ship-over nor a ship operator were resisted heavily (Mwinga, 1991). Insiders also revealed that the transactions with the East Africa conference were generally more acceptable (Banda, 2007). I discovered that the point that was raised by insiders of poor expertise was common in many corruption scandals (Katulwende, 2009). Generally, political authorities tended to appoint citizens who were not qualified in some position merely based on loyalty which led to corruption and incompetence in government operations (Donge, 2008). All these poor judgements and decisions by authorities impacted negatively on press freedom and on the maturity of democracy as journalists were exposed to politicians who were too excited to please their appointing authorities by arresting and intimidating critics (Chirwa, 1996).

In the case of the copper shipment scandal, the irregularities in the shipping arrangements were first detected by officials connected to the East African conference who informed the government (Banda, 2007). Government launched an investigation way back to 1989 and several officials were linked to the scam (Mwinga, 1991). Throughout these investigations, *The Post* was rigorous in its use of sources (Phiri, 2008). Sources were wide from South Africa, Britain and East Africa to substantiate the allegations (Mwinga, 1991).

Therefore, I view this sort of tabloid journalism as creditable and valuable. Very often broadsheet journalism is more credited as serious in the investigation of corruption while tabloids are often ignored as irresponsible in the use of sources (Deuze, 2005). In fact, in the stories that I selected, the perpetrators ended up being arrested and imprisoned (Katulwende, 2009; Phiri, 2008). Similarly, my respondents in the next Chapter explain how vital the sources are in the development of corruption stories (Banda, 2007).

In further exposing the copper shipment corruption scandal, *The Post* journalists contacted the police public relations officials who confirmed the investigation but could not provide details (Mwinga, 1991). Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines officials too were not willing to



offer more information (Donge, 2008). *The Post* further quoted two former employees of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines who were living in London at a time and argued were fired for objecting to the inflated charges by Marcol for copper shipment (Mwinga, 1991).

They further told the tabloid that they were willing to assist with investigations in the copper shipment scandal provided they were given indemnity by government (Phiri, 2008). I discovered that in all the stories that I saw in total, oftentimes when scandals were exposed by *The Post*, government investigation wings were reluctant to launch investigations (Katulwende, 2009; Donge, 2008). Moreover, even after launching, they were careful not to speculate to avoid annoying the appointing authorities until after broader consultations (Phiri, 2008).

Meanwhile, a parliamentary row developed following *The Post's* story on the copper shipment scandal (Mwinga, 1991). Some members of parliament further provided additional details arguing that it was widely known since 1987 (Donge, 2008). For example, Kabwata Member of Parliament Michael Sata disclosed that the mines were swindled of more than US\$ 40 million. *The Post* estimated US\$ 20 million. Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines and Metal Marketing Corporation threatened legal actions against the tabloid (Phiri, 1999). They argued that the news was fabricated to sell editions. They also claimed that they were doing perfectly well and stories were mere speculations (Mwinga, 1991).

*The Post* further revealed that government authorities refused a British firm to audit the accounts of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines arguing that it was capable of conducting its own business affairs (Donge, 2008). As already pointed out, the copper shipment scandal was very much connected within the inner political circles. Officials who resisted Marcol arrangement were either fired or transferred (Mwinga, 1991). Similarly, during President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) and President Rupiah Banda's (2008-2011) leadership, officials who resisted their corrupt activities often lost their jobs (Phiri, 2008).

In the copper shipment scandal, initial source came from the transaction that involved copper transportation in a ship named '*Al Razak*' from Tanzania to the United States totalling more than US\$ 113,000 (Mwinga, 1991). In this transaction, Metal Marketing Corporation was charged US\$ 56.88 instead of US\$ 38.95 per tonne of copper shipment. Metal Marketing Corporation lost more than US\$ 107,000 in copper shipment from Tanzania to Japan on a ship named '*Conman*'. And more than US\$ 137,000 on a ship named '*Trout Banik*'. *The Post* reported that some top government officials refused investigating teams access to examine contracts with Marcol. It even produced an extract of the report that exposed conspiracy to profit on freight charges through corruption (Mwinga, 1991).

Drawing insights from scholarly debates, Phiri (2008) argues that the investigative journalists often initiate the stories based on suspicion of wrong-doing and rather than simply reporting in a more passive way of the routine news of the day, they cast a light on a subject in a more prosecutorial way showing that something is completely wrong (Ongowo, 2011). Therefore, since copper was the lifeblood of the country's economy, the story opened a Pandoras box full of corrupt activities (Mwinga, 1991). Some members of parliament wanted more details on the issue during the debates while others made several attempts to disrupt the contributions. For example, Prime Minister Malimba Masheke denied the allegations that were revealed by the tabloid arguing that they were mere speculations (Donge, 2008). He even gave copper shipment figures from 1987 to 1991 (Mwinga, 1991). On contrary, Kabwata Member of Parliament Michael Sata provided details and names of the government officials who were involved in the scandal. He further argued that some officials were fired who even the police had confirmed to the tabloid (Mwinga, 1991).

In fact, it was a common practice by President Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1990) to fire government officials without conducting thorough investigations (Lungu, 1986). Even though it could be argued that *The Post* played a critical role in exposing corruption in Kaunda's regime just after 1991, the copper shipment scandal story by tabloid journalist Jowie Mwinga shed light on the world of corrupt government officials (Donge, 2008). Copper shipment scandal was transnational in character and implicated many top government officials. It was

an example of what characterised the tabloid as a muckraker that dug news deeper (Phiri, 2008).

Generally, investigative journalism can result in official public investigations about the subject or activity exposed as was the case with the copper shipment scandal (Ongowo, 2011). In addition, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007:145) note that the investigations can actually lead to the production of legislations that eventually can outlaw certain forms of wrongdoings such as corruption. A classical example, according to de Burgh (2000:3), was the investigative journalism that resulted in official public investigations as a result of the *Washington Post's* Watergate scandal that forced the resignation of United States President Richard Nixon in 1974 (de Burgh, 2000:78-79). This form of investigation was only possible through the protection of a source whose identity was kept secret for 30 years (McFadyen 2008:140).

Therefore, the 'Copper shipment scandal exposed' story was covered within the broader context of press freedom within an emerging democracy (Kasoma, 1996). Even though the political and legal environment was fragile for the tabloid journalists especially in the absence of freedom of information law, *The Post* demonstrated its courage to confront political authorities who were at liberty to use legal and political mechanisms to silence opposing and investigatory journalism practice (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Donge, 2008).

#### **4.2. GBM solicits ZESCO poles contracts**

During my fieldwork (2011-2012), *The Post* carried out a number of investigatory stories but rarely connected to the ruling government officials (Amsterdam, 2012). This was partly because the tabloid was an ardent supporter and was cautious not to offend the political authorities (Chama, 2012). However, there was one interesting story that the tabloid covered of the Minister of Defence Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba who was popularly known as GBM; - the initials of his name. The story was the first by the tabloid to un-cover corrupt activities by the minister in President Michael Sata's government (Kalaluka, 2012).

*The Post* story was published on October 2, 2012 by journalist Mwala Kalaluka arguing that the minister abused his authority and solicited Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) for a contract to supply wooden poles for overhead electrification of households (Kalaluka, 2012). It exposed the minister's attempt to influence the awarding of the contracts to his company for one year and published documents that were obtained from the Patents and Companies Registration Agency to prove ownership of the company and to convince the readers (Katulwende, 2009).

The documents listed the minister's company Arizona Marketing & Distribution whose contract bid price was more than US\$ 7 million. I noted that in the copper shipment scandal already discussed (Mwinga, 1991), *The Post* also published the contract documents between Metal Marketing Corporation and Marcol, while in the 'GBM solicits ZESCO poles contracts,' the tabloid published the company registration documents (Kalaluka, 2012). Critically, all the documents were meant to provide what Ongowo (2011) and Bird (1990) calls the story's credibility. Documents were intended to make sure that the readers were able to believe the story as presented by the tabloid (Phiri, 2008).

But the minister denied the tabloid story arguing that it was a mere speculation (Kalaluka, 2012). However, *The Post* further revealed the documents that were obtained from the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation. Documents detailed the contract to supply materials for one year with other companies that were connected to the minister's family members Bwalya Chama and Mwamba Sibongile. The companies were Premia Supplies Limited with the bid price of more than US\$ 330,000 and Astro Holdings with the bid price of more than US\$ 400,000 (Kalaluka, 2012).

In fact, my interviews with journalists revealed that there were complaints from the general public of high level institutional corruption in President Michael Sata's government (Phiri, 2008). There were other other complaints of family arrangements in corruption activities (Amsterdam, 2012). Some of my respondents further argued that the individuals that were connected to ministers were able to win government tenders easily (Phiri, 2008). Generally,

nepotism was wide spread in many emerging democracies in Africa and impacted negatively on development and on press freedom (Ogbondah, 1994). In many parts of the continent, opposing views were often suppressed by relatives that were connected to the ruling authorities (Phiri, 2008). Besides, family members of ruling authorities tended to occupy strategic positions to make sure that the regime remained in power (Karikari, 2004).

*The Post* further exposed documents that showed notification of the award for the tender that indicated the preliminary contracts. Documents clarified that there was right of appeal against the intention for losers before the notice period expired on September 19, 2012 (Kalaluka, 2012). The tabloid still maintained that the minister influenced the awarding of the contracts and produced details of physical pressure on Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation management. It further contacted the minister who merely laughed off the allegations describing them as a 'load of nonsense' (Kalaluka, 2012).

In fact, in 2012, as I collected data, this story was very sensational in terms of pictures and headlines. For example, on October 23, 2012, *The Post* published a sensational headline that 'Engilex denies links with GBM', one of the six preliminary companies ZESCO awarded contracts. The story was accompanied by the picture of GBM standing next to his silver Mercedes Benz car registration number GBM50 (Kalaluka, 2012). I was particularly surprised why the tabloid suddenly started exposing corruption scandals in President Michael Sata's government (Amsterdam, 2012).

*The Post* further challenged the Anti-Corruption Commission to inform the nation about the allegations (Kalaluka, 2012). As I pointed out in the copper shipment scandal story, oftentimes the investigation wings of the government were very reluctant to initiate investigation without following orders (Donge, 2008; Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007). A number of my respondents too offered similar sentiments and concerns during interviews in Chapters Five and Six.

Finally, *The Post* reported that the Anti-Corruption Commission was making preliminary inquiries on the allegations to determine whether full investigations were necessary. For example, on October 27, 2012, the tabloid reported that the Anti-Corruption Commission found sufficient grounds upon which to start normal investigations. Furthermore, it cited many sources in conducting its own investigation (Kalaluka, 2012).

Generally, investigative journalists expose scandals of financial wrongdoing, political corruption, and enrichment in public office (Phiri, 2008). In some cases, they provoke political action over many issues (Ongowo, 2011). The best investigative journalists look not only on individuals but also on systemic failures (Banda, 2007). They show individual's wrongs as part of a larger pattern of negligence and abuse and the systems that make these abuses possible (Phiri, 2008). They probe not just what is criminal or illegal, but also what may be legal and overboard but nonetheless harmful (Coronel, 2010:113). *The Post* in keeping a critical eye on government operations finally reported on November 4, 2012, that the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation was not going to award the contract to the minister as the tender was under serious investigation (Kalaluka, 2012).

I discovered that investigative journalism at *The Post* was evolving and maturing in three distinct forms; original investigative reporting, interpretative reporting, and reporting on investigations. Original investigative reporting involved tactics similar to the ones used by the police (Banda, 2007). *The Post* uncovered information before it was gathered by others in order to inform the citizens of events that might have affected their lives (Phiri, 2008). Interpretative reporting came after careful thought and analysis of facts to bring about a complete context that provided deeper understanding by the citizens. Reporting on investigations developed from the discovery or leak of information from official investigation which were already underway or in preparation (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007:146-147). All these techniques were used effectively by the tabloid (Phiri, 2008).

*The Post*, despite receiving criticism for its lack of ability to expose corruption in President Michael Sata's government, it managed to uncover the minister's corrupt activities

(Amsterdam, 2012). However, some respondents argued that there were double standards in the way that the tabloid uncovered the story (Phiri, 2008). Some respondents explained that there were two ministers that were at the centre of corruption allegations but the tabloid chose to pursue one minister and leave the other. Other respondents also pointed out that the tabloid was on a smear campaign to brand the minister as a crook and a rogue trader after its owner Fred Mmembe was outbid in the tender process (Amsterdam, 2012).

But as to whether these observations were true or not, the story by the tabloid shed light on the political and ownership dynamics that impacted on press freedom and on factors that hindered journalists in playing their critical role in their professional practice within an emerging democracy (Chama, 2012; Amsterdam, 2012; Phiri, 2008). I have touched on these issues in detail in the next Chapter on how journalists at times got incorporated into political power structures and how this affected their professional practice (Kasoma, 1996).

The 'GBM solicits Zesco poles contracts' story was a typical case that showed *The Post's* capacity to expose corruption scandals within the broader context of press freedom while at the same time being discredited by its critics (Amsterdam, 2012; Phiri, 2008). On the other hand, there was a danger in exposing corruption as oftentimes investigative journalists created more enemies among the corrupt elites (Coronel, 2010). Generally, investigative journalism's nature of comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable often puts investigative journalists in conflict with the power elites, the rich, and the corrupt who seek to conceal information (Ongowo, 2011).

I should also note here that there was no freedom of information law in the country which impacted negatively on press freedom and on journalists' roles within democracy while at the same time exposed them to arrests and intimidation (Phiri, 2008). In situations where the flow of information is suppressed by the power elites, journalists are left with no option but to engage in questionable tactics like hiding identity and deceit (Ongowo, 2011). Other tactics includes buying information from whistle-blowers so as to expose wrongdoing against the society (Ongowo, 2011). Restricting the flow of information hinders the scrutiny of public

authorities and also causes problems to the professional fabric of tabloid journalism within an emerging democracy (Phiri, 2008).

Therefore, the 'GBM solicits Zesco poles contracts,' story, demonstrated another role tabloid journalists can play in holding corrupt government authorities accountable to the citizens (Banda, 2007). The story also shed more light on the political environment *The Post* operated and provided more insights on press freedom and on factors that affected journalists in their practice within the broader context of an emerging democracy (Chama, 2012). This story was also cited by many of my respondents in the next Chapter within the context of the political positioning of the tabloid and its impact on press freedom and on journalism practice (Amsterdam, 2012).

#### **4.3. Harrington urges thorough revaluation of Zamtel sale**

The debate on the notion of press freedom within an emerging democracy and on anti-corruption journalism is very complex (Ongowo, 2011; Banda, 2007; Ogbondah, 1994). For example, *The Post* since its inception in 1991 exposed many corruption stories in the government operations (Phiri, 2008). It was able to take on any political authority regardless of position (Chirwa, 1996). But its investigative stories often created a lot of problems to its journalists who were regularly harassed by the political cadres (Chama, 2012).

Generally, information that investigative journalists exposed touched on corruption and immoral behaviour (Phiri, 2008). Other vices were often hidden by the power elite and as such, journalists were forced to dig deep to obtain information (Banda, 2007). *The Post's* investigative journalism's key controversy was centred on how information was obtained as there was no freedom of information which always created ethical and legal problems (Ongowo, 2011; Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007).

*The Post* was the first publication to blow the whistle on the fraudulent valuation of the country's public telecommunication company – Zamtel on February 6, 2009 (Mzyece, 2009).



It argued that there was need to establish a tribunal to investigate the role played by Communications and Transport Minister Dora Siliya in the hiring of RP Capital Partners Limited of Cayman Island to value Zamtel assets on December 22, 2008 (Chanda, 2013). It pointed out that the parliamentary and ministerial code of conduct was breached (Mzyece, 2009). I noted that even though there were serious information gaps in the story both in terms of depth and accuracy, the government was very quick to react to the allegations (Katulwende, 2009).

Following the tabloid's revelations, President Rupiah Banda and Vice President George Kunda publicly defended the minister and threatened the tabloid with closure arguing that the minister was more intelligent than tabloid journalists in doing business and that there was nothing wrong in engaging RP Capital Partners Limited (Kalaluka, 2009). But pressure mounted on government when *The Post* exposed more stories that connected Banda's son (Henry Banda) to the scandal which led to the setting up of the Dennis Chirwa tribunal by Chief Justice Ernest Sakala on March 2, 2009. But still, the government argued that the tribunal would vindicate the minister (Katulwende, 2009).

Taking this point even further, the government often appointed citizens in strategic positions who were able to drive its agenda (Amsterdam, 2012). If for instance appointees acted against ruling politicians' interests, they were often fired (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007; Lungu, 1986). It was perhaps the reason why the ruling politicians were sure of the minister's vindication by the tribunal (Katulwende, 2009).

On the contrary, the Dennis Chirwa tribunal (March 2, 2009-April 16, 2009) found that the engagement of RP Capital Partners Limited to value Zamtel assets before partial privatization was full of irregularities (Chanda, 2013). For example, Article 54 sub Article 3 of the Constitution was breached by the minister when RP Capital Partners Limited was selected by ignoring legal advice from the Attorney General concerning the Memorandum of Understanding (Katulwende, 2009). Observance of the legal advice of the Attorney General

was a ministerial requirement. The appointing of valuers after Cabinet approval was too the responsibility of Zambia Development Agency (Chanda, 2013).

The tribunal further found irregularities in the Memorandum of Understanding with RP Capital Partners Limited in which the minister committed government to pay US\$ 2 million as a valuation fee (Chanda, 2013). Interestingly, *The Post* reported Vice President George Kunda's sentiments following the tribunal's findings as a bunch of lies. In fact, Kunda still defended the minister as innocent arguing that she followed all tender procedures as required by law. He also explained that the minister followed advice from Solicitor General on behalf of the Attorney General who sanctioned the minister's action (Katulwende, 2009).

*The Post* further quoted the minister's intention to apply for the judicial review to challenge the tribunal's powers to invoke Constitutional provisions as a preserve of the High Court (Chanda, 2013). After the judicial review by the Lusaka High Court (May 26-27, 2009) into the Denis Chirwa tribunal, High Court Judge Phillip Musonda quashed the tribunal findings which the tabloid argued was suspicious (Kalaluka, 2009) and even questioned the integrity of the judiciary (Chanda, 2013).

As already pointed out, at times the government appointed citizens in positions of authority with the aim of pursuing its agenda (Silwamba, 2013). The judgment to discredit the tribunal findings was very much suspicious looking at the quality of evidence (Katulwende, 2009). *The Post* too was very critical of Judge Phillip Musonda's arguments in quashing the findings of Supreme Court Judge Dennis Chirwa's tribunal (Katulwende, 2009).

Its editorials were characterized by allegations of corruption in the judiciary and questioned the credibility of many judgments (Kalaluka, 2009). Even when President Michael Sata came to power in 2011, *The Post* kept pressure on the case of Zamtel. Finally, Sata set up another tribunal that was chaired by Justice Minister Sebastian Zulu (Chanda, 2013). The second tribunal made similar findings to that of Denis Chirwa of the minister's disregard for legal advice of the Attorney General's chambers (Katulwende, 2009). It also exposed the

minister's antics in firing and chasing top government officials who resisted the valuation process (Silwamba, 2013).

The tribunal further noted that RP Capital Partners Limited was connected to Henry Banda the son of President Rupiah Banda and there were clandestine collaborations with Communication and Transport Minister Dora Siliya. It discovered that RP Capital Partners Limited was single-sourced to value Zamtel and subsequently hired as transaction advisors for Zambia Development Agency (Chanda, 2013). The findings confirmed *The Post's* allegation when it initially exposed this story in early 2009 (Mzyece, 2009).

The reality was that *The Post* exposed the scandal through investigative journalism in order to shed some light on authorities' abuse of positions at the expense of the citizens (Phiri, 2008). For example, stories through sensational reporting managed to draw attention of the citizens (Banda, 2007). It was only through *The Post* that the citizens got an insight of the corrupt activities in government operations and transactions (Banda, 2007).

The background to the valuation before the sale of Zamtel was that in 2008, the government under President Rupiah Banda made the decision to privatise Zamtel due to poor management (Mzyece, 2009). Minister of Communication and Transport, Dora Siliya, contracted RP Capital Partners Limited of Cayman Island to value the assets (Katulwende, 2009). In June 2010, seventy five percent of shares in Zamtel were sold for US\$ 257 million but the government only recovered US\$ 15 million (Silwamba, 2013). *The Post* exposed the Zamtel scandal arguing that it was fraudulently transacted. In the end, the tabloid was vindicated and many politicians were implicated (Chanda, 2013).

Investigative reporting demands the highest standards of accuracy and brevity especially in countries without freedom of information law (Banda, 2007). Generally, investigative journalists "side with the less powerful" and this is the very purpose and root which underpins the notion of defending the general society, who need to be protected from the excesses of the power elites and the ruling class in society (Ongowo, 2011). Similarly, in the

next Chapter, many of my respondents cited investigatory stories as good journalism practice.

Therefore, *The Post* through its own investigatory form of journalism using sensational language played a critical role in exposing accountability in government operations (Phiri, 2008). Its journalists despite operating under fragile legal and political environment contributed in opening up a democratic space of public debate on accountability (Banda, 2007).

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Investigatory form of journalism by *The Post* contributed to the promotion of the culture of transparency (Phiri, 2008). But what was surprising and of public concern was that in all the scandals, the perpetrator often denied the allegations and even threatened lawsuits (Kalaluka, 2012; Katulwende, 2009; Mwinga, 1991). And in all the exposures, what was very common was that all the perpetrators squandered millions of public funds (Banda, 2007). It was a worrying culture and this was where the tabloid was very critical in playing a watchdog role in national building (Phiri, 2008). But still, the threats of lawsuits on investigatory journalists impacted negatively on press freedom and were factors that restricted journalists' role in their practice within an emerging democracy (Chama, 2012).

*The Post* exposed many corrupt activities since its inception in 1991 (Kalaluka, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Donge, 2008; Banda, 2007; Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996). It was credited with a number of high profile investigations some of which were often complex and international in character (Banda, 2007; Mwinga, 1991). It was fitting to conclude that the tabloid was capable of playing a watchdog role over government accountability (Donge, 2008). Despite its professional challenges, it was capable of muckraking corrupt activities (Phiri, 2008).

Indeed, the tabloids played a critical role in the transition to multiparty democracy in 1991 (Global Journalist, 2000), and in exposing abuses in the programme of privatisation (1991-

2001) in which cobalt was undervalued on the world market in an effort to sell the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines to a preferred bidder (Banda, 2007). In 2001, it disclosed how the ruling political party (Movement for Multiparty Democracy) diverted public funds from the National Assembly to its own political convention (Donge, 2008). It also exposed Meridian BIAO Bank collusion with government officials in the Ministry of Finance in which US\$ 90 million was printed and externalised into an offshore account in the Bahamas (Banda, 2007). It was evident (1991-2011) that it played a watchdog role over government accountability (Phiri, 2008), but after 2011, more needed to be done (Amsterdam, 2012).

The main issues in this Chapter were on rampant corruption in government operations and on tabloid journalists' role in exposing irregularities (Banda, 2007). Other issues were that tabloid journalism despite being associated with the entertainment paradigm can actually play a critical role in the maturity of democracy (Ongowo, 2011). Another issue was that even though tabloid journalism is not often associated with muckraking form of reporting, it plays a critical role in an emerging democracy through sensational reporting (Mapudzi, 2009). It is within this context that the next two Chapters discuss issues identified in this Chapter in considerable depth based on tabloid journalists' personal experiences on the ground. The debates in the next two Chapters will be contextually understood in relation to issues discussed in this Chapter which will often crossover but within the context of the subject areas under discussion with respondents.

The next Chapter looks at the main roles of tabloid journalists as defined by 'themselves', on the legal and political pressures in the environment they operated, and on how such pressures frustrated and liberated their work. It explores whether there are ways regulation of journalism practice works well in relation to press freedom and to maturity of democracy. Findings in the next Chapter came from my fieldwork interactions with tabloid journalists for a period of six months as discussed in detail in the research methods in Chapter Three.

## Chapter V

### ***The Post* and its political positioning**

This Chapter is on *The Post* and its political positioning and on its struggling political allegiances. It looks at the main role of journalists as defined by themselves and on the legal and political pressures as professionals. It finally looks at their frustrations and liberations within their environment and on their examples of where regulation of journalism practice works well. Generally, press freedom is the lifeblood of any democratic society even though there are many limiting factors that prevent journalists from playing their critical role as professionals (Chanda, 1998). In fact, the practice of tabloid journalism in an emerging democracy is complex because of the interaction of law and politics which impact on the practice of journalists. This Chapter is written as a result of my personal interactions with tabloid journalists on how they perceived their practice within the broader context of an emerging democracy.

#### **5.0. Introduction: The struggling political allegiances of *The Post***

This section starts by looking at the political opposition to President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001). Then looks at the political partnership with President Levy Mwanawasa (2002-2008), and then goes on to look at the political suppression of President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011). Finally, the section looks at the political support of President Michael Sata (2011-2013) which highlights issues of (a) political appointments in government operations, (b) taking advantage of the ignorant citizens, and the (c) political news sources in government operations.

It looks at journalists within and without government influence and on the ways they are both oppositional to perceived malaises of power and the way in which they become incorporated into power structures. It exposes the power relations within politics and media, and journalists' aspirations and hypocritical tendencies, which often create a general feeling of

professional discomfort, or uneasiness, whose exact cause is shrouded in political games and usually difficult to escape. In unpacking the overreaching question on press freedom and on factors that prevent journalists from playing their professional roles within democracy, I present data about *The Post* and its political positioning collected from its journalists (2011-2012), and is structured according to the themes below as emerged during the analysis:

1. The main role of journalists as defined by journalists themselves
2. Legal and political pressures on practicing tabloid journalists
3. A Frustrating and liberating journalism environment
4. Examples where the regulation of journalism works well

My data came from interviews with eleven tabloid journalists who declined to be identified and consequently, pseudonyms are used as personal identifiers. In addition, I sourced two tabloid journalists whose information was readily available online (2010-2013) identified as Chansa Kabwela and Goliath Mungonge. My interviews were structured around a number of guiding questions [Appendix B].

I discovered that the legal and political dynamics including ownership mechanisms were the major-limiting factors to press freedom within the emerging democracy and dominated the discussions during interviews. Interestingly, I discovered that the critical journalists were those that were no longer working for the tabloid. In addition, the respondents that were still employed by the tabloid were less eager to talk in fear of victimisation despite my several assurances that their identity was to remain protected.

Even though *The Post* played a major role in opening up the culture of public shaming since 1991 within the broader context of press freedom (Phiri, 2008), during my fieldwork, it did not monitor government critically except when the situation got out of hand, but even that, it criticised in a very subtle way (Amsterdam, 2012). Critical citizens who exposed government

corruption were not covered in news. It suppressed its critical role of watching over government operations and made a radical and complete turnaround.

But *The Post* before 2011 regularly attacked government decisions and monitored accountability of public funds (Banda, 2007) but from 2011, it suppressed its critical role in what some respondents claimed was for economic interests by its owner (Amsterdam, 2012). In fact, it regressed to its earlier position from 1991 when it supported initially the government of President Frederick Chiluba who later turned against the tabloid when it started criticising his government (Global Journalist, 2000).

### ***Political opposition: President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001)***

*The Post* survived the predatory behaviour of President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) who used several political attempts to eliminate it from the political scene (Chirwa, 1996). Even though initially the tabloid supported Chiluba from 1991, it changed its approach because of failure by his government to honour campaign promises resulting in several attempts by government to water it down (Makungo, 2004). Its journalists endured government pressure (1995-2001) as Goliath Mungonge (interviewee) narrated that its owner's leadership helped *The Post* to survive and prosper. He pointed out that the owner understood politics very well and that meant understanding people and how to motivate them and that was fundamental in achieving success. He explained that the owner led by example, maintained enthusiasm and was always willing to join in with others to get a job done whether driving the papers from the Copperbelt Province himself or writing an editorial (Mungonge, 2007).

From 1995 to 2000, Chiluba was determined to eliminate the tabloid and used public funds with the core purpose of forcing it to support government policies (Chirwa, 1996). In fact, *The Post* was the only viable opposition news medium that exposed the struggles of the suffering citizens and brought them to the public domain (Phiri, 1999). Other competitors were scared to speak-out in fear of being sued or deregistered (Hamasaka, 2008). Chiluba's



lifestyle was illustrated in one of *The Post* (22 September, 2006) editorials on the buying of political support.

The editorial explained that everything with Chiluba started and ended with money (Donge, 2008). Christian Churches were corrupted with cash hand-outs and some pastors even hired themselves out to him simply because of money. Chiluba claimed was making cash payments to buy his way to heaven (Phiri, 1999). He set in a new despicable culture of theft and general banditry that is today extremely difficult to root out. Those who were in the election campaigns could surely confirm this (Donge, 2008:84-85). Chiluba prided himself for bribing people without any shame. Even when the government was struggling to fund essential social services, Chiluba had money for expensive designer clothes (Phiri, 2008).

Relevantly, Bird (1990) explains that tabloid journalists construct stories appropriate to particular types of news. Stories give imagery and descriptions able to name and shame (Phiri, 2008). *The Post* published stories of corruption using local images and clichés to drive the message across (Banda, 2007). Its use of slang and stereotypes in reporting resonated with readers' experiences. *The Post* often compared Chiluba to a '*lazo*', a local term to describe a trickster (The Post, 2010a). Similarly, the description of 'mods and rockers' in Britain owes a great deal to the tabloid journalists' conception of how anyone labelled as a 'thug or a hooligan' should speak, dress and even act (Bird, 1990).

In 2001, Chiluba stepped down after two five year terms and after several attempts to change the Constitution to stand for the third term failed lamentably (McGreal, 2001). *The Post* had campaigned remarkably against the third term through sensational coverage of news demonstrating another vital role of tabloid journalism in contributing to the maturity of democracy while watching over authorities' decisions (Donge, 2008).

### ***Political partnership: President Levy Mwanawasa (2002-2008)***

During the subsequent reign of President Levy Mwanawasa (2002-2008), *The Post* continued to champion the fight against corruption and was often critical of government leadership (Phiri, 2008). Mwanawasa's government used the tabloid effectively in the fight against corruption that was prevalent in his predecessor's government (Banda, 2007). It was even able to benefit from government contracts and advertising revenues (Makungu, 2004).

However, the tabloid was also a victim of arrests and intimidation at times during the reign of Mwanawasa (Phiri, 2008). For example, in February 2002, its owner was sued for defamation after quoting Member of Parliament Depak Patel in an article that called Mwanawasa a 'cabbage' in reference to a road accident that left the national leader with head injuries "prone to verbal slip-ups and poor health" (BBC News, 2002). Unfortunately, Mwanawasa died with a stroke on August 19, 2008, at Percy Military Hospital in Paris France before completing his term of office (Chimpinde, 2013).

### ***Political suppression: President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011)***

In 2008, President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) took over and *The Post* kept pressure on government accountability angering many authorities with its hard-line news (Phiri, 2008). For example, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) narrated how stories of corruption were pursued to put pressure on the government's decision-making process. He noted how government attempted regularly to suppress its prolific reporting. He explained that the tabloid generated 'blockbuster whiz' stories (Banda, 2007). He cited the exposure of Dora Siliya as Transport and Communication Minister as one, regarding how the abuse of her authority in the privatization of the country's telecommunication company was exposed (Mzyece, 2009). He explained that sensational reporting exposed massive corruption (Phiri, 2008).

*The Post* gathered information that was sufficient to convince government authorities to commence corruption investigations (Phiri, 1999). John Kaputo (interviewee) too argued that

some stories angered President Rupiah Banda who made several attempts to suppress reporting (Katulwende, 2009). He pointed out that the authorities that were sympathetic towards the tabloid were often humiliated and suppressed (Chimpinde & Chilemba, 2010).

Similarly, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) revealed that the tabloid was considered hostile by Chief Government Spokesperson Ronnie Shikapwasha who often warned citizens about its operations. He cited an incident in which Banda even threatened to sack leaders who were sympathetic towards the tabloid. He argued that Banda sacked Mpulungu Member of Parliament Lameck Chibombamilimo and Katuba Member of Parliament Jonas Shakafuswa claiming that they were informers of the tabloid.

There was sufficient evidence from content analysis of *The Post* editions (2008-2011) to show its offensive coverage of President Rupiah Banda's government (Katulwende, 2009). Iness Nsokolo (interviewee) explained that the tabloid criticised government relentlessly and sensationally. She argued that its news articles were very offensive and against government evident through headlines, textual space, and pictures. She noted that the tabloid often accused government of abuse of authority (Mzyece, 2009). She cited the editorial contents as characterised by abusive and offensive language relentlessly (Kalaluka, 2010).

On the other hand, while the tabloid kept attacking the government, opposition leader Michael Sata's political campaigns (2008-2011) enjoyed good coverage (Chilemba & Sinyangwe, 2010). *The Post's* political positioning conflicted with Kasoma's (1997a) argument that the newspapers should not take political sides unless pursuing a personal agenda. Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) narrated that many readers were aware that the tabloid was an ardent supporter of the opposition leader. Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that it was not critical of the opposition leader despite his own frailties. Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) too, pointed out that it was in favour of Michael Sata and his political agenda.

### ***Political support: President Michael Sata (2011-2013)***

The practice of journalism within an emerging democracy shows inherent problems that impact negatively on its maturity (Kasoma, 1996). Besides, the political and legal restrictions make it difficult for journalists to operate freely. Within all these dynamics, political authorities tend to use the powers at their disposal to dictate the condition that constitute democracy and which often impact negatively on the participation of ordinary citizens (Phiri, 1999).

*The Post* heavily supported President Michael Sata's (2011-2012) campaigns and even allocated some of its journalists, photographers, and editors to specifically cover the opposition leader on campaign trail (Amsterdam, 2012). It often capitalised on stories of the Mongu shooting in January 2011 to campaign for the opposition leader (Chilemba, 2011).<sup>23</sup> Generally, tabloid journalists defend their style of writing as simply finding 'the story' within an event and then shaping it to fit a particular construction of reality (Bird, 1990).

*The Post* campaigned for the opposition leader heavily (Kalaluka, 2011). Audrey Muma (interviewee) explained that it was boring at times especially at political campaign rallies listening to speeches which waiting for stories to emerge. She added that the opposition leader made several promises that once elected was to change laws and policies especially on Chinese investors who were abusive towards workers (Chama, 2010). She argued that she extracted news from various political rallies and brought it to the general public using sensational language (Mapudzi, 2009).

Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) also felt that the sensational language was vital to bring the message across even though many citizens often complained of being quoted out of context (Phiri, 1999). She explained that the citizens were not quoted out of context but only that they provided information that was needed by the tabloid (Matsebatilela, 2009). She felt

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<sup>23</sup> *The Post* journalist Patson Chilemba very often covered stories of opposition leader Michael Sata during campaign meetings. For example, on July 8, 2011, Chilemba quoted Sata arguing that President Rupiah Banda was to cease from bribing people for votes and honour the Barotse Agreement of Western Province which was causing fighting for separation from Zambia since 1964 (Chilemba, 2011).

that the words were merely repackaged with a particular viewpoint to send the message across (Mapudzi, 2009).

*The Post* allocation of journalists to cover opposition leader Michael Sata, relates well with Kung's (2008) arguments of doing it for strategic reasons to win government favours. Partisan reporting was common in Britain and the United States for political and economic reasons (Manne, 2011). It was very common for newspapers to even allocate journalists to accompany preferred candidates (Farhi, 2008). Newspapers owned by media magnet Rupert Murdoch were known to support particular politicians (Manne, 2011).

Politicians too tended to favour newspapers that supported them after winning elections (Manne, 2011). In Britain, tabloid journalist Andy Coulson formerly of the *News of the World* became Prime Minister David Cameron's Press Assistant Officer. Before Cameron won the elections, the tabloid often published damaging articles against the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Watt, 2011). Coulson's appointment created a lot of controversy among politicians in the opposition Labour party. He later resigned after being implicated in the phone hacking scandal. The resignation prompted opposition political party leaders to criticize Cameron's judgment for bringing a former tabloid editor with baggage into Downing Street (Watt, 2011).

Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) explained that the journalists that travelled and reported heavily on Michael Sata's campaign activities (2010-2011) were later offered positions. She narrated that the tabloid regularly published articles in support of the opposition leader while discredited the government (Amsterdam, 2011). Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) too argued that the tabloid exposure of corruption scandals in government aided the opposition leader's winning chances (Amsterdam, 2010).

Similar comparisons were drawn with Britain on the way journalists became incorporated into political power structures and the effect on press freedom and democracy. Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2009-2010) was often exposed by Rupert Murdoch's newspapers

which aided the opposition political parties (Watt, 2011). Brown was once caught off camera referring to a genuine citizen a 'bigoted woman' who wanted to find out government's position on immigration (Prince, 2010). Brown unknowingly that the microphone recorder was active was later subjected to relentless attacks by the *News of the World* (Watt, 2011). In this regard, Street (2005) fears the media for its ability to damage politicians and to shift the public opinion. He argues that the media can be a potentially volatile space even when politicians are able to engage with it. He further points out that even though the media exist in different formats and operate in different ways, they tend to behave similarly when either aiding or bringing down politicians (Makungu, 2004).

#### ***(a) Political appointments in government operations***

Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) confirmed (2011- 2012) that some journalists from *The Post* were offered positions by President Michael Sata's government after coming into power. She cited that some worked in the President's Office, and in various Ministries, while others in several embassies across the globe.<sup>24</sup> But Isaac Mubita (interviewee) justified the appointments arguing that all the appointees were qualified. He felt that all the appointees were citizens only that they worked for the private newspaper. But he could not explain why

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<sup>24</sup> *Zambian Watchdog* editorial of July 8, 2012 analysed political favours that were enjoyed by *The Post* and its owner Fred Mmembe. It argued that the owner was so powerful having all the government machinery at his disposal. He had George Mwenya Chellah (former tabloid journalist) at State House as President Michael Sata's Press Officer. What this entailed was that all the information regarding the country either confidential or non-confidential was detected. Chellah was aware of all the briefings on security and economy, on local and international, on government and private, including businesses that involved President Michael Sata. He was aware of Sata's whereabouts at State House and outside. He was aware of all sensitive and non-sensitive information. Therefore, Chellah's former boss who secured (him) the job was also privy to the information. Permanent Secretary Amos Malupenga (former tabloid journalist) at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was Mmembe's man. Malupenga was very cardinal to government operations regarding the media. Almost all First Secretaries too in foreign embassies were Mmembe's men and women. This meant that all government activities internationally were known to him. Therefore, Mmembe was privileged to information making him a danger to national security. Moreover, Mmembe secured jobs for close and reliable friends like Mutembo Nchito as Director of Public Prosecution, Musa Mwenye as Solicitor General, Mumba Malila as Attorney General, and Patrick Matibini as Speaker of the National Assembly. He was waiting for a shakeup in the judiciary to fuse in friends as judges. Mmembe was using underhand methods to his advantage (*Zambian Watchdog*, 2012).

only *The Post* journalists were offered positions. Critical to the appointment was the fact that journalists were offered jobs created after recalling experienced career diplomats (Mukwasa & Kalaluka, 2011).

Ironically, *The Post* (2008-2011) criticised President Rupiah Banda's government for appointing political cadres. By accepting the appointments, the tabloid demonstrated hypocrisy by participating in the same activities it criticised. Similarly, Innes Nsokolo (interviewee) felt that the tabloid by participating in the same acts it was heavily against during the campaigns tantamounted to lack of seriousness in its campaigns. She argued that the journalists took up positions in government because the jobs were more financially lucrative. In addition, John Kaputo (interviewee) noted that the journalists were poorly paid and working in government was too secure to resist. He explained that the positions were more attractive than routine journalism. But he felt that the timing of the job offer was poorly done as it clearly demonstrated that the daily tabloid partnered with government.

In addition, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) felt that the journalists were offered positions because they played a critical role during the campaign trail. She pointed out that the tabloid provided relentless coverage for the opposition leader. She explained that the stories attracted many readers that were critical of government. She felt that sensational reporting aided the opposition political leader's winning chances (Kalaluka, 2011). Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) noted that President Michael Sata offered positions to journalists in appreciation for their contributions. She argued that the tabloid was an ardent supporter at the time when the opposition leader was deprived of fair coverage by the government media. She felt that the critical question was on whether government was justified to repay its journalists with positions at the expense of experienced civil servants who were fired unceremoniously (Mukwasa & Kalaluka, 2011).

In refuting the appointments and government partnership, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) narrated that the tabloid never played any role in securing his position in government. He argued that the position became available and made an application. He explained that an

appointment was offered after short listing and interviews. He noted that he was in government to serve the general public and was not indebted to the tabloid owner. He further clarified that in no way the owner played any role in securing the job. He pointed out that in life and in jobs people move on and that was with his case. Critically, the argument that the appointments were based on merit was misleading. For example, Amsterdam (2012) provides a detailed list and explanation on how journalists were benefitting from government positions and how others were waiting for appointments because of their support during the campaigns.

In fact, many of *The Post* journalists left the tabloid (October 2011-June 2012) to join government (Amsterdam, 2012). Similarly, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) narrated that the political landscape favoured the tabloid under President Michael Sata. She explained that after journalists got jobs, it was rare to publish information that was critical of government operations. She even equated the tabloid to government broadsheets in news content.

In addition, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) too felt that the appointments into government were not good for democracy. She argued that it was demoralising for career diplomats who spent many years studying. She gave a long list of journalists that were appointed by President Michael Sata that included First Secretary for Press at the Zambia High Commission in Malawi Chansa Kabwela, and First Secretary for Press at Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations Chibaula Silwamba. She clarified that Silwamba was instrumental in the coverage of Sata while in the opposition. She provided further names that included Patson Chilemba as Secretary for Press in South Africa, Joe Kaunda as Deputy Ambassador in South Africa, Sam Mujuda as Deputy Ambassador in Namibia, George Chellah as Special Assistant for Press and Public Relation to President Michael Sata, Eddie Mwanaleza and Thomas Nsama as State House Photographers, and Amos Malupenga as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.



Critically, Audrey Muma (interviewee) too castigated the appointments arguing that the reason why so many journalists were rewarded from the same tabloid was not because of being qualified but for siding with President Michael Sata during campaigns. Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) criticised the government for appointing journalists into foreign missions at the expense of highly trained career diplomats as 'shameful and embarrassing to the country'. She added that it was also insulting to countries where journalists were sent that deserved better trained personnel. She felt that many of the appointed journalists were a disgrace for being drunkards. She explained that the appointments were demoralising for individuals who spent many years training in foreign affairs and diplomacy.

Besides, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) saw the appointments as damaging to the credibility of the tabloid. She pointed out that its failure to criticise government operations reduced itself to a political newsletter that always sang praises. In this regard, Kasoma (1995) cites publications that always praise the government as able to lose credibility easily as loyal readers often fly away in large numbers. *The Post* readership too was hit in similar fashion and figures were at its lowest during the same time (Amsterdam, 2012). Besides, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) acknowledged the interactions of politics and journalism practice at the tabloid. He felt that the appointments were political but noted that the reshuffles were normal and common in politics. He also pointed out that the change of government meant change of positions and often recalling diplomats. He explained however that, despite journalists working for the tabloid they were free to work with government too.

Appointments followed after Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Kasonde recalled 50 senior diplomats (Mukwasa & Kalaluka, 2011). I argue that even though journalists were free to work with government, the appointments came so abruptly from one newspaper. I noted that some of the diplomats that were recalled were better qualified and more experienced like Professor Royson Mukwena from Britain and Doctor Nevers Mumba from Canada. Moreover, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) saw the appointments as a mere pay-back-time and that had nothing to do with efficiency in diplomatic missions operations. She argued that it was clear that President Michael Sata was paying back the tabloid support with government

positions. She saw it as a total waste of tax payers' money on misguided and misplaced appointments.

***(b) Taking advantage of the ignorant citizens***

*The Post's* common criticism was its tendency to peddle sensationalism rather than providing the type of information that could contribute to democratic citizenship (Phiri, 1999). By effectively depoliticizing the readers to the role of consumers, the tabloid prevented them from being active citizens (Wasserman, 2008). From 2011, it failed to articulate the politics of the everyday for readers – the poor and the marginalised (Banda, 2007).

Generally, *The Post* was expensive for ordinary citizens. But despite poor economic conditions, it attracted both the literate and illiterate citizens because of its big pictures and sensational headlines (Phiri, 2008). Although it enjoyed unprecedented popularity (Yoler *et al.*, 2007), it was often accused of undermining an emerging democracy. John Kaputo (interviewee) criticised the tabloid for supporting government for its own interests. He added that it was using the ignorant citizens to pursue its' own interests. He explained that it blacked-out individuals that were critical of government and its operations intentionally.

Within this regard, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) too complained that the tabloid was dangerous for the maturity of democracy. He felt that despite pursuing market interests, it needed to consider the critical citizens too. Kasoma (1996) argues against copying the Western model of journalism practice claiming that African tabloids in an emerging democracy need to consider the needs of the poor (Wasserman, 2008).

Tabloids are often seen as constituting a 'crisis for democracy' due to their focus on diversions, scandal, and entertainment, rather than serious issues that pertain to the well-being of the poor (Mapudzi, 2009). But at another level, they contribute to a democratic public sphere by undermining the social hierarchy which allows the elite to dominate the political debate at the expense of the poor citizens (Sparks, 2000:25).

In emerging democracies, tabloids instil in poor citizens a sense of community and identity, shared conditions, values and understanding (Mapudzi, 2009). They provide moral help for their daily struggles to cope with everyday life (Wasserman, 2008). In addition, they contribute effectively on matters of ordinary citizens and their lives (Mapudzi, 2009). Tabloids approach to news of bottom-up perspective help readers to make sense of a world that often seems to defy dominant value framework (Bird, 1990). This is especially the case in contemporary media-saturated societies where tabloids are ever more important to political communication and understanding (Zoonen, 2000:6). An important perspective on tabloids are the view that they functions as platforms for groups or individuals that are excluded from traditional channels and use it as a means of political expression (Zoonen, 2000:13).

Unfortunately, this was not the case with *The Post* as it supported government and ignored the poor. It was no longer speaking for the section of the population which was sidelined by mainstream media (Amsterdam, 2012). It was not able to broaden the public sphere by validating a more diverse spectrum of topics that were considered worthy of public discussion (Wasserman, 2010).

### ***(c) Political sources in government operations***

*The Post* alliance with President Michael Sata (2011-2012) contributed to its accurate prediction of government plans using large network of sources. A case in point was when it reported the impending arrest of former President Rupiah Banda over corruption allegations committed before leaving office. But Banda was later quoted by the *Daily Nation* arguing that he was not aware of any government plans. But still, he was later arrested as predicted by the tabloid and subjected to interrogation and to eventual loss of presidential immunity (Kuwema, 2011b).

Tabloids engage sources in strategic positions that provide information regularly (Ongowo, 2011). Tabloid journalists too heavily depend on sources to confirm or refute the allegations.

Sources tend to provide reliable tips (Bird, 1990) even though at times can be misleading (Phiri, 1999). Joseph Sakala (interviewee) confirmed working with reliable sources regularly which were instrumental in shaping the stories (Mungonge, 2007).

On another level of dealing with sources, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) revealed working with sources within government to 'intimidate and suppress critical civil servants.' He claimed working with highly connected sources in government. He pointed out that some were former journalists who supplied information. In my view, the assertion despite difficult to prove provided more insights on the underpinnings that surround and that undermine press freedom and journalism practice (Ongowo, 2011).

*The Post* often quoted sources that supported government in a dramatic fashion (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) felt that despite its political positioning, its instinct for quality news was still there only that it 'played down stories' that were critical of government. She felt that journalists knew exactly what they wanted to write and how they wanted the information to be interpreted. She added that they were also aware of the competing interests (Kasoma, 1996). Scholarly debates show that sometimes stories are even modified due to political and legal reasons (Mano, 2005).

It was evident that within the broader debates on press freedom, there were many factors in an emerging democracy that impacted on journalism practice. This section has shown 'the struggling political allegiances of *The Post*'. It has looked at the tabloid's political relations with President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001), President Levy Mwanawasa (2002-2008), and President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011). Finally, it has looked at the political allegiance and total support of President Michael Sata (2011-2013) highlighted through (a) political appointments in government operations, (b) taking advantage of the ignorant citizens, and (c) political news sources in government operations. My next section looks at the main role of journalists as defined by journalists themselves within an emerging democracy.

### **5.1. The main role of journalists as defined by journalists themselves**

This section is on 'the main role of journalists as defined by journalists themselves'. It then looks at the issues that surround the provision of credible information to citizens. It further looks at the provision of factual information using sensational language, and on the shaping of public opinion. In addition, it looks at the provision of objective information and on informing citizens. Finally, it looks at finding the right sources to back the stories, and on educating, entertaining, and informing citizens.

Given the tenuous and changeable position of journalists in relation to government élites already discussed, it was important to discuss how Journalists themselves articulated their role. In fact, I did not anticipate the changed political positioning of *The Post*. It was also evident that some journalists struggled to defend the negative impact of the political change of the tabloid on their practice.

#### ***(a) Provision of credible information to citizens***

Many respondents argued that the provision of credible information was their main role. Credibility is an important journalistic credo (Kasoma, 1996). Once a journalist collects information from a source, the problem is on whether a reader should believe a source of information. Journalistic stories are often peppered with attribution that list sources' credentials meant to prove the credibility of information. Listing sources' credentials is meant to enable readers to make independent verifications (Ongowo, 2011). Generally, journalists' role in democracy is to 'provide credible news' to citizens (Wasserman, 2010). Journalists often have stables of credible sources that can be contacted to provide expert opinion on any issue. Expert sources provide background and additional details to news (Mapudzi, 2009).

In addition, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) saw his main role as the provision of credible news to the readers. He pointed out that consequences surrounded every news item and

often impacted on one's journalism profession. He felt that news was not an opinion but a reality that existed outside an individual journalist. He explained having sharp ideological differences with what was perceived to be news while working at *The Post* and couldn't allow editorial managers impose another editorial ideology on news. He felt that sadly news was what the owner of the tabloid thought and often were the views of the people he wanted to further an agenda.

According to Deuze (2005), tabloid journalists know what they want and merely go out to get the sources to prove the story. As Audrey Muma (interviewee) explained that the sources were essential to providing the story lines with the required credibility for readers to believe (Mapudiz, 2009). Credibility of news in journalism practice is an important professional virtue even though its meaning shifts according to the context (Bird, 1990).

*The Post* tended to use expert sources to provide weight to the stories (Phiri, 1999). Providing views of an 'expert' to the news involves journalists listing credentials that effectively prevent it from being cited as an opinion (Kasoma, 1997a). Expert knowledge gives more credibility to the news (Kasoma, 1996). Understanding of experts may be contextual and can also involve any legitimate person that can be quoted in order to back up the story. Expert knowledge is meant to let the readers decide for themselves the credibility of the information (Deuze, 2005). Many people accept both scientific and spiritual knowledge and news encompass experts from different fields of knowledge (Bird, 1990).

#### ***(b) Provision of factual information using sensational language***

According to Bird (1990), news writing should be based on provision of factual information. But the problem is on how far journalists can go in provision of facts in political affairs (Wasserman, 2008). Moreover, in tabloid journalism, news content usually tends to carry hallmarks of awe and shock (Deuze, 2005). For example, *The Post* was able to provide news using sensational language which often caused shock and anger (Phiri, 2008).

For example, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) saw journalists as purveyors of factual information to citizens (Kasoma, 1997a). He felt that the provision of facts to citizens was difficult because of the political positioning of the tabloid. Critically, John Kaputo (interviewee) too explained that the tabloid by siding with the government impacted negatively on news facts. He cited incidents when news stories were ruthlessly edited to avoid causing offence. He felt that it was difficult to adhere to the principles of factuality in news reporting.

Tabloid journalists during news writing process tend to repackage information which at times can shift the emphasis and the reader's interpretation of facts (Deuze, 2005). Packaging of the story at times tends to create a certain impression on the reader (Mapudzi, 2009). But the overall purpose is for the readers to believe the information as factual accounts (Bird, 1990). Tenets of factuality allow tabloid journalists to provide information of reasonable quality to readers (Biressi & Nunn, 2008). Factuality is crucial in tabloid stories and the problem of uncritical tabloid stories is inherent in the reporting process itself (Bird, 1990).

Besides, Goliath Mungonge (interviewee) saw the main role was to report facts accurately. He was concerned with the end story and how the readers made individual judgement (Sparks, 2000). Within this context, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) too explained that her role was to provide news stories that were full of facts and to constructively criticise government and hold it accountable. She felt that many facts were often ignored and suppressed when the tabloid started to side with the government (Amsterdam, 2012).

### ***(c) Contribution in shaping public opinion***

Another issue that emerged was on journalists contributions to the shaping of public opinion. For example, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) pointed out that her role of shaping public opinion was enormous but fulfilling and came with its own challenges. She explained that it enabled her to know something about everything to inform the public effectively. She felt that

her role was all about 'service' and being ready to help people to form fair opinions on social and political issues (Wasserman, 2008).

Talking of shaping public opinion by journalists, Kasoma (1996) explains that tabloids stir-up together all sorts of stories depending on the available ingredients. There are stories of crime and stories of spiritual things. All these are stories of issues that happen all the time in communities (Mapudzi, 2009). In addition, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) saw tabloid journalism practice as diverse, just as her role in democracy was also diverse (Deuze, 2005). But she felt that her role was to provide news that was contextual bearing in mind its impact on public opinions. She explained that her role was not merely about sensational reporting but shaping public opinion responsibly (Chama, 2012).

#### ***(d) Provision of objective information***

Objectivity is the cornerstone of journalism practice despite being difficult to achieve in many press institutions because of political, legal and ownership challenges (Tuchman, 1978). In this regard, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) explained that her role was to provide objective information. But she felt that objectivity at the tabloid was a matter of public debate (Phiri, 1999). In addition, she saw ownership interests and sensational reporting as major impacts on objectivity.

Scholars argue that tabloid journalism's view of objectivity is different to that of mainstream broadsheets (Deuze, 2005; Wasserman, 2008). Mainstream broadsheets tend to provide upper middle class news with stories about upper lifestyles and quotes from the same class. Tabloid stories may be dismissed as loony whose way of analysing objectivity is closely tied to its 'style' of sensational reporting (Bird, 1990).

For example, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) felt that informing the citizens objectively through sensational language was her major role (Phiri, 2008). She saw objectivity as vital for the promotion of democracy. Critically, some scholars argue that journalists' desire for



objectivity opens them to manipulation by sources who desire particular stories to be told in particular ways (Ongowo, 2011; Bird, 1990). In addition, John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that sources affected the notion of objectivity as they tended to successfully get their stories published according to their desire.

Dependence on sources to provide information for newspapers can suppress objectivity (Deuze, 2005). Journalists know that a story can be written differently depending on the use of information from sources (Mapudzi, 2009). Whether the story can be written objectively or selectively integrated into the news framework is up to tabloid journalists (Bird, 1990).

#### ***(d) Informing citizens and finding the right sources to back the stories***

Tabloid journalists apart from the routine responsibility of 'finding the story' within the daily events involve finding the right citizens to back the story (Deuze, 2005). Isaac Mubita (interviewee) felt that informing the citizens and find sources to back stories was his main role. He was careful not to expose sources to 'sell out' journalists. He consulted sources repeatedly for different stories. He worked with a database of sources to confirm or refute stories. Phiri (1999) and Kasoma (1997a) criticise the poorly use of sources in the construction of news arguing that it exposes journalists to legal and political intimidations.

Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) treasured informing citizens using the database of sources. She explained that the database made it easy to know exactly who to consult for stories. She added that quoting sources truthfully made it possible to sustain the relationship (Bird, 1990). Isaac Mubita (interviewee) too felt that it was vital to have a database because stories came from different organisations. He pointed out that the different sources needed to be quoted depending on their area of expertise. He explained that it was a challenge to inform the citizens about government plans. He felt that there was a lot of pressure to report truthfully.

In this regard, Kasoma (1995) explains that the tendency to distort news and carry out smear campaigns against perceived enemies contribute to the loss of sources. Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that communicating information to the citizens using reliable sources was vital. She felt that without reliable sources, it was difficult to confirm or refute information. She felt that her role was to communicate information responsibly using the right sources.

Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) stressed that the communication of truthful information was vital. He felt that the illiteracy level was very high and citizens tended to easily believe information. He explained that it was easy to manipulate many citizens with imaginable sources. In fact, the patching up of news using sources relates well with Bird (1990) that at times journalists cook up information and cites an *Enquirer* journalist that was fired for misrepresenting an expert source.

Other scholars claim that some tabloid journalists are apparently very creative with their sources that may not even exist (Kasoma, 1995). For example, *The Post* heavily quoted sources and some even out of context to either criticise or support government operations (Phiri, 1999). In many occasions, the tabloid quoted sources without even mentioning their affiliations and locations (Makungu, 2004) as Bird (1990) calls them 'anomalous creature' or 'living dinosaurs'.

In fact, the lack of source affiliation and location makes it difficult to verify the credibility of news (Deuze, 2005). Quoting a verifiable source too is often stretched to its limits with often a 'stringer' or 'tipster' taken as sufficient evidence to support the story. Thorn (1989), cited by Bird (1990), tried to track down and verify three sample stories in the *Weekly World News*. Two stories from foreign countries turned out to be complete fiction while the third (like the majority of stories originating from the United States or Britain) was verifiable, even if the style was flamboyant.

**(e) *Educating, entertaining and informing citizens***

Within this context, John Kaputo (interviewee) saw his role was to educate, entertain, and inform citizens. He acknowledged that the tabloid was often accused of fabricating information instead of informing and educating citizens while entertaining them properly. He felt that the tabloid was also often criticised for misrepresenting stories instead of educating citizens (Kasoma, 1996). Similarly, Phiri (1999) explains that tabloids in an emerging democracy should educate, inform and entertain citizens. Joseph Sakala (interviewee) too saw entertaining citizens and helping them with information in order for them to make their own judgements as his major role (Mapudzi, 2009).

Even though tabloids in the United States and Britain tend to suffer similar criticisms and stress entertainment over information (Manne, 2011; Deuze, 2005; Bird, 1990), Audrey Muma (interviewee) saw tabloids in an emerging democracy as often reliable sources of information and entertainment. This was despite Western journalists tendency to draw a distinction between 'information and entertainment' and to place tabloids firmly in the camp of the trivial, but nonetheless greatly valued by the general public to justify the value of tabloids in human affairs (Deuze, 2005).

In addition, even though tabloids may provide 'trivia' news, they are regarded by their audience in emerging democracies as 'important information,' sources and celebrity stories too often provide relevant life lessons (Matsebatlela, 2009). Tabloids provide an alternative view of the world that intellectuals might prefer to think does not exist (Bird, 1990). Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) explained that the provision of sensational information which government broadsheets lacked was her major role. She noted that educating and entertaining citizens while playing a critical role on government was another important aspect of journalism.

Therefore, I have looked at responses on how journalists defined their main roles within *The Post* and its political positioning. I earlier looked at the provision of credible information, on

factual information using sensational language, and on the contribution to shaping public opinion. I looked at the provision of objective information and on finding the right sources to back the stories. Finally, I looked at educating, entertaining and informing citizens. My next discussion is on the legal and political pressures on practising tabloid journalists.

## **5.2. Legal and political pressures on practicing tabloid journalists**

This section looks at the ‘legal and political pressures on practicing tabloid journalists’. It first looks at the political intolerance of opposition views and on need for legal knowledge. It then looks at frequent arrests and imprisonments of journalists, and at deciding on trivial and important information. It further looks at stretching the ethical limitations of the profession, and at politically motivated intimidations and cultural interactivity on the practice.

It further looks at the impact of news and authorities abuse of the fragile legal and political mechanisms. It looks at the lack of freedom of information and heavy reliance on sources and on the ownership challenges. It also looks at vague laws and hostile political landscape, and on the suppression of watchdog journalism through the interaction of law and politics. Finally, it looks at the coverage of authorities’ privacy and on their abuse of legal and political power.

Generally, law and politics impact negatively on press freedom and on tabloid journalism and are some of the factors that hinder journalists’ duties in their practice within an emerging democracy (Chama, 2012). Therefore, in this section, I look at how journalists defined the legal and political challenges on their profession through interviews.

### ***(a) Political intolerance of opposition views and the need for legal knowledge***

Even though *The Post* (1991-2011) endured a lot of political and legal challenges (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Chirwa, 1996), John Kaputo (interviewee) was never bothered because he always read regulations about the media. He argued that he was very careful because of

the fragile political environment. He added that the political authorities were intolerant of opposing views and tended to abuse laws to suppress journalists. But he made it his business to know the legal limitation of the practice. He cautioned that the ignorance of the law was not a defence and he took the argument very seriously. He felt that many journalists were not familiar with media laws and that was something media institutions needed to remedy through training.

In fact, the knowledge of legal statutes by journalists is highlighted by Moorhouse (1964) as an essential component of the profession but cautions that it never guarantees freedom from lawsuits. *The Post* suffered many legal and political pressures from government authorities (Chama, 2012). It was always harassed making it difficult for the tabloid to flourish (Makungu, 2004).

***(b) Frequent arrests and on the difficulty in deciding between news and trivial while stretching the ethical norms***

Journalists are often victims of arrests and imprisonment whenever they criticise government relentlessly in emerging democracies (Makungu, 2004). Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) was arrested in June 2009 for circulating pictures of a woman giving birth outside the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka (Ndulo, 2009). The pictures were meant to highlight the impact of medical workers strike on ordinary citizens (Chama, 2012). She argued that the circulated pictures were not published by *The Post* but merely sent in confidence to government authorities and civil society organisations to show how the medical strike was affecting ordinary citizens. She noted that the government authorities interpreted the pictures as distribution of 'pornography' and in gross violation of indecent image laws. She explained being arrested and subjected to a lengthy court trial.

In my view, the above case highlighted the challenges of tabloidization, cultural practices, press freedom and journalistic responsibilities in news construction (Chama, 2012). Generally, many tabloid journalists often struggle in selecting news (Deuze, 2005).

Boundaries between trivial and important information often change all the time (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000). For example, in the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy's undoubted 'womanising' was not reported by the main stream newspapers, although tabloids started writing about the information not long after his death (Bird, 1990). Joseph Sakala (interviewee) too, was often at the centre of controversies on news content. He noted that at times deciding which information to consider trivial or important created difficulties (Moyo, 2005).

*The Post* was often accused of being insensitive to cultural norms (Kasoma, 1997a). Its journalists were usually arrested on 'soft pornography' charges that could be considered normal in the British *Sun* (Wasserman, 2008). Chansa Kabwela's (interviewee) case evolved around 'indecent images' the government argued were meant to corrupt public morals (Ndulo, 2009). She explained being unfairly accused of peddling pornography with a view to scandalise citizens. She narrated being arrested, charged, and prosecuted. She felt that the whole episode was disturbing for her family.

Tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies often creates public debate because of its tendency to stretch the ethical limits (Wasserman, 2008). *The Post* journalists were often accused of breaking ethical norms over news content (Chirwa, 1996). At times its pictures were often considered by some sections of the society as unethical (Mapudzi, 2009). It tended to stretch the ethical norms that created controversies (Ongowo, 2011).

### ***(c) Politically and legally motivated intimidations and on cultural interactivities***

In discussing press freedom and factors that impacted negatively on journalists' duties within the broader context of democracy, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) felt that her arrest and subsequent prosecution over pornographic pictures was politically motivated. She notes that the government was always trying to suppress its progressive reporting with threats and intimidation. She explained that there were various attempts to close the tabloid down by the

government. She felt that the heavy pressure was exerted using political and legal mechanisms to tame journalists down.

Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) explained that at times the government charged the tabloid even without sufficient evidence. She argued that the journalists were often locked up with the core purpose of suppressing their level of motivation. She added that the political and legal challenges conspired with the culture of intolerance of opposing views (Chama, 2012).

As previously signalled, culture and press freedom often conflict in emerging democracies (Moyo, 2005; Kasoma, 1997a). For example, Chansa Kabwela's (interviewee) pictures at the centre of legal challenges were contrary to cultural values. Moreover, Ndulo (2009) argues that it was regarded a taboo for men and children to see a woman giving birth in the country. Even though pictures were intended to highlight the impact of the medical strike on the ordinary citizens and not for prurient curiosity, they caused a cultural shock (Chama, 2012; Ndulo, 2009).

But again, I argue that the government authorities acted heavy-handedly to arrest and prosecute the journalist whose intention was not to scandalise the citizens but to expose their struggles (Phiri, 2008). Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) explained that the intention was not to embarrass the woman on the photo but to expose her to the authorities' attention. She added that the woman even lost her baby that could have survived if the government was responsible on financing health services. She noted that the woman would have died as well. She felt that it was sad that the government could focus on the picture and not a helpless mother. She couldn't understand why the government saw pornography and not the dead baby and the suffering mother (Chama, 2012).

*The Post* provided relentless coverage of the Chansa Kabwela case through sensational headlines. Its owner too was also intimidated by the government and even cited for contempt of court (Ndulo, 2009). In discussing the relationship between media and law,

Curran (2002) argues that the newspapers tend to run big headlines and sensational quotes when their journalists are under prosecution. He explains that every journalist under prosecution thirsts and yearns for space and popularity in the newspaper pages.

On another note, fragile legal and political environment impacts negatively on journalism practice within emerging democracies (Chama, 2012; Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996). *The Post* was often under serious confrontations with authorities partly because of the fragile environment (Phiri, 1999, 2008). Goliath Mungonge (interviewee) narrated that it was difficult to predict the impact of controversy the news was likely to create before publishing. He explained that it was difficult to predict how those affected by news would react to the publication. He argued that it was impossible to know in advance what actions they would take in their reaction. He felt that there were just so many vague laws to easily cage a journalist and politicians abused such laws (Chama, 2012).

The laws too were often abused by politicians and provided fear to many journalists (Phiri, 2008). *The Post* journalists were often detained in overcrowded prisons to lower their activities (Global Journalist, 2000). Isaac Mubita (interviewee) pointed out instances when journalists were sued and even imprisoned for many years. He explained that many others faced victimization by authorities who abused their powers (Chama, 2012).

#### ***(d) Lack of freedom of information and the heavy reliance on sources***

The lack of legal access to information on public operations created many problems for journalists in their practice (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007). According to Isaac Mubita (interviewee), there was no freedom of information law and at times journalists used questionable tactics to get information. He added that there was no law that protected confidential sources of information making it difficult to access information and back the allegations effectively (Phiri, 2008; Makungu, 2004).



Sources of information are highly treasured by tabloid journalists (Sparks, 2000). Tabloids tend to use anonymous sources frequently (Deuze, 2005). At times, sources may in reality be no more than unsubstantiated rumour (Matsebatlela, 2009). But such stories often create problems for tabloid journalists (Bird, 1990). Even though publication of false news was a crime, and despite tabloid journalists' heavy reliance on sources, they were not often daunted in their practice (Yoler *et al.*, 2007).

Goliath Mungonge (interviewee) pointed out that it was always important for one to be careful. He narrated that he only worked for *The Post* for less than a year before being arrested. He found himself at Lusaka Central Police Station arrested for criminal defamation together with Fred Mmembe, late Managing Editor Bright Mwape, and former journalist Nkonkomalimba Kafunda. He added that they were charged with defamation of President Frederick Chiluba's Assistant Press Officer Richard Sakala. He explained that they made accusations that he was a 'trick dickey' with 'extra marital affairs' and lacked formal journalistic training.

Generally, *The Post* (1991-1999) was often charged with various offences by the government authorities to cripple down its reporting (Chirwa, 1996). Judges, too, were corrupt and tended to award heavy penalties in favour of the ruling authorities (Chama, 2012). It often tended to publish facts but the difficulty was in proving the allegations (Kasoma, 1997a). In tabloid journalism practice, it may be easy to identify the stories that are completely fabricated but the problem is to distinguish fact from fiction especially in extra marital affairs (Deuze, 2005).

Many respondents faced legal and political challenges while working for *The Post*. They were often subjected to frequent arrests and police brutality for refusing to reveal sources. Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) pointed out that her stories relied on sources heavily. She added that but behind the sourced headlines were real-life issues; marriage break-ups, fraud, nepotism, and organised crime. She noted that sensational headlines and pictures were merely a tip of an iceberg (Phiri, 2008). Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) too argued that

she was always aware of the political and legal forces that were always trying to suppress her sources of information. She stressed that despite the legal and political fears, she always tried to conceal their identity.

Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) felt that the lack of freedom of information law and the lack of legal protection of sources was a major challenge. She explained that the journalists needed to be aware of the grey areas of the law and sensitive to the political climate. She argued that the law and politics worked in tandem and impacted heavy pressure on journalism (Chama, 2012). She explained that the lack of freedom of information law made sources reluctant to provide information to journalists.

***(e) Ownership challenges on legal and political mechanisms including on democracy***

Media businesses are capable of determining the direction of an emerging democracy (Kung, 2008). Owners of media institutions can exert pressure on government authorities which can have implications on the political direction of the country (African Media Barometer, 2009). Furthermore, owners of powerful media institutions in emerging democracies can damage enemies and build images of friends for strategic reasons (Kasoma, 1996).

Generally, allowing one person to own many media institutions might not be good for democracy globally (Phiri, 1999). Media owners are known to use their institutions which accord them power to access politicians and lobby to change laws in their favour (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, News Corporation owner Rupert Murdoch owned multiple forms of media in the United States, Europe, Asia and South America and utilized them to influence public officials (Croteau & Hoynes, 2005).

Media owners are often criticized for providing self-serving information disguised in political advocacy as news (Manne, 2011). In fact, various studies on Rupert Murdoch shows one of his television news channel Fox Cable that it provided materials that were critical of non-

conservative politicians (Kung, 2008). Accusations too were pointed out by critics for favouring Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair (Croteau & Hoynes, 2005). Other political favouritism was of Newt Gingrich and George Bush including ties with Clarence Thomas a personal friend (Kung, 2008).

Furthermore, Rupert Murdoch's media attacked Hillary Clinton during the Senatorial race in New York. It dug up 'news' that she uttered an anti-Semitic slur 26 years before. 'News' with dubious documentation emerged in the middle of a tight race in a State with large Jewish population. It became a major focus of attention despite her denial of the allegations repeatedly. Jewish groups stood to her defence until the issue died down (Kung 2008; Croteau & Hoynes, 2005).

In trying to get a foothold in China, Rupert Murdoch's media censored reports critical of that country (Kung, 2008). Publication of a book by Chris Patten the last British governor general critical of China over Hong Kong was stopped due to political interests (Manne, 2011). His media in Australia and Britain was also known to attack enemies and promote friends (Manne, 2011). Critics complained that Murdoch was able to make any deal with any government if it could help his media empire (Croteau & Hoynes, 2005).

Therefore, media owners can impact both negatively and positively on democracy and on legal and political dynamics (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996). Ownership interests impact on journalism's professional practice too and its editorial complexities (Amsterdam, 2012). Oftentimes owners of media institutions have their own predilections which conflicts with legal and political underpinnings (Manne, 2011). Other scholars claim that sometimes journalists are imprisoned for pursuing the agenda of their owners (Curran, 2002).

Isaac Mubita (interviewee) explained that at times *The Post* owner implicitly asked them to put pressure on the government. He argued that the situation was common in the run towards the presidential and parliamentary elections. He gave an example of reporting news about the son of President Rupiah Banda that quoted a source that made damaging

allegations. He pointed out being informed by the editor that the accused was taking legal proceedings. He was also advised that libel charges were likely to follow. He explained that he was very scared even though he knew that what was reported was true.

John Kaputo (interviewee) too argued that at times working as a tabloid journalist was stressful and frightening. He pointed out that the ownership interests often conspired with political and legal dynamics (Chama, 2012). He noted that he tried his level best (1991-1995) to report the information accurately. But he narrated that the legal and political mechanisms made the practice dangerous. For example, Manne (2011) explains that at times media ownership interests can impact on the legal and political dynamics. He further argues that ownership interests on politics often impact on media laws within the broader context of democracy (Kung, 2008).

*The Post* journalists were aware of their political and legal limitation (Global Journalist, 2000). But despite their knowledge, they were always sued and subjected to arrests and detention (Chirwa, 1996). Detentions were meant to suppress their quest for press freedom (Global Journalist, 2000). In fact, arrests intensified (1996-2001) when President Frederick Chiluba used government machinery to arrest journalists (Makungu, 2004).

Furthermore, journalists were often charged by government agents to suppress their opposition views (Chirwa, 1996). Arrests and charges ranged from criminal defamation to espionage (Global Journalist, 2000). Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) pointed out that he was once arrested together with the owner on charges of state security. He argued that they revealed what the government considered classified documents.

A lot of documented evidence showed regular arrests of the tabloid owner together with his journalists (Amnesty International Report, 1996). For instance, Mathurine (2004) too provides details of frequent arrests of journalists Masautso Phiri and Bright Mwape including the owner Fred Mmembe for sedition and false news. Similarly, Makungu (2004) explains that the government tactics were to suppress the journalists from exposing corruption.

Journalists were often arrested, denied bail and subjected to a lengthy detention at notorious Lusaka Central Prison (Chimbokaila State Prison) for hardcore criminals (Global Journalist, 2000).

***(f) Vague laws and hostile political landscape to suppress opposition views***

Law and politics impacted negatively on press freedom within the broader context of an emerging democracy (Chama, 2012). Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that the vague media laws and hostile political landscape forced many journalists (1995-2000) to pursue other careers. She narrated that working as a journalist was a risky business (Banda, 2004). She explained that the tabloid often sided with the opposition political views (Phiri, 2008). She felt that its political positioning created tension among government authorities (Banda, 2007).

Despite the vague legal framework and hostile political landscape, journalists regularly criticised government operations (Chanda, 1998). Besides, it was an offence to defame the country's leader and the charge carried three years imprisonment without an option of a fine upon conviction (Makungu, 2004). Government authorities often charged journalists that criticised the national leader with defamation (Phiri, 2008). At times political cadres were often unleashed on journalists that were critical of government (Chama, 2012).

Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) was very scared of the media laws and the interaction of politics. She argued that it was one of the reasons for pursuing a career in public relations. She pointed out that she felt worthless as a journalist but still she had families to feed (Mano, 2005). She noted that she witnessed laws being changed by Parliamentarians to target and charge individuals. She saw the legal and political environment as not conducive for journalism practice. She felt ordinary citizens suffered heavily as they were dependent on journalists for information (Phiri, 1999). Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) explained that many of her colleagues were often sued, arrested, and even imprisoned. She felt politicians used laws at their disposal to suppress journalists.

Hostile political environment and vague legal guidelines deprived citizens' access to sufficient information (Makungu, 2004). Generally, citizens depended on the media for information in order to make their own judgement (Banda, 2004). But when government authorities used laws regularly to arrest and intimidate journalists, it was ordinary citizens who suffered heavily (Phiri, 1999).

***(g) Suppression of watchdog journalism through the interaction of laws and politics***

In emerging democracies, journalists are often suppressed in their desire to expose government operation (Ongowo, 2011, Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007; Chirwa, 1996). For example, in 2001, tabloid journalists Fred Mmembe and Bivan Saluseki and Member of Parliament Edith Nawakwi were arrested for defamation and other offences for accusing President Frederick Chiluba of theft (Phiri, 2008).

Accusations followed Chiluba's political campaign tendency to distribute public funds to interest groups like schools, hospitals, civil society organisations and religious groups (Banda, 2007) when many ordinary citizens were struggling (Donge, 2008). Joseph Sakala (interviewee) argued that the tabloid played a critical watchdog role under difficult political and legal environment. He felt that the government was intolerant of journalists that exposed its operations and that the situation was not good for the maturity of democracy.

*The Post* (2001-2011) was a very critical watchdog over the government (Phiri, 2008). Opposition political leaders used the tabloid as a platform to air their critical views (Banda, 2004). Its provision of a platform for opposition leaders often infuriated the ruling authorities (Phiri, 2008). By taking an opposition approach to government interests, the tabloid struggled legally and politically (Mathurine, 2004). In this regard, Kasoma (1995) argues that any newspaper seen as a revolutionary force by authorities often struggle to survive. Phiri (1999) too explains that any publication should as well not be seen as a blind follower of

government authorities by its readers. At least every newspaper ought to occupy some middle ground to survive (Aspinall, 1973).

I should also point out here that (1991-2011) the tabloid was relentlessly targeted with lawsuits (Phiri, 2008). It was partly because of its' hardline in exposing corruption in government operations (Kalaluka, 2010). Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) argued that very often government sued and arrested her colleagues for various offences. She did not like the environment despite working with talented journalists like Bright Mwape, Jowie Mwiinga, Chris Chitanda, Muleya Mwananyanda, and Chilombo Mwendela (Phiri, 1999).

#### ***(h) Coverage of authorities' privacy and their abuse of legal and political power***

Tabloid journalism tendency to expose private affairs of political authorities often conflicts with the expectation of the press in emerging democracies by the ruling elites (Wasserman, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). According to Donge (2008), President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) vowed to close *The Post* down for its persistent exposure of his private affairs. Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that Chiluba was notorious for unleashing political cadres on journalists (Chirwa, 1996). But she was not constrained in exposing the private scandals that touched on government operations despite the legal and political limitations. She argued that the stories of authorities' private affairs often touched on corruption in government and needed public exposure.

She gave an example of a colleague that was arrested after publishing an article that quoted a woman that claimed to be a lover of Chiluba since 1983. She pointed out another story that claimed Chiluba was a foreigner from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. She argued that the tabloid (1995-2001) even went to the Democratic Republic of Congo to investigate with family members to back the allegations. She cited other stories that accused Chiluba of using fake and stolen identity documents. She stressed that in all the stories, the tabloid displayed documents and pictures to back the allegations.

She further cited another story that discredited Chiluba (1991-1999) as a crook and that he was caught smoking cannabis as a teenager and expelled from Kawambwa Secondary School. Other stories, she added, labelled Chiluba as a womaniser whilst working as a trade unionist in the Copperbelt Province (Phiri, 2008). All stories, she noted, subjected *The Post* to many legal and political challenges (Chama, 2012). For example, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) too, argued that he was arrested with the tabloid owner on several occasions for exposing Chiluba's private affairs. He explained that many news articles were often interpreted by the Minister of Home Affairs as defamation (Chirwa, 1996).

Similarly, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) also claimed that President Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008) often targeted journalists with lawsuits. He felt that charges intensified whenever the tabloid exposed his private affairs and corruption scandals (Phiri, 2008). He cited a story that quoted a source that claimed Mwanawasa was suffering from Parkinson's disease arguing that the news item caused serious legal controversies. He further argued that even President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) too also subjected journalists to legal and political pressures including frequent arrests. He explained that Banda was uncomfortable with stories on his private affairs on matters of public interests. He cited a story that claimed he was from the neighbouring Zimbabwe and was ruling the country illegally (Phiri, 2008).

Despite the difficult legal and political conditions under which journalists operated (1991-2010), I should stress here that from 2011, *The Post* made a complete turnaround to support President Michael Sata's government. It ceased to criticise and monitor government which reduced the legal and political challenges but compromised its objective practice (Amsterdam, 2012).

Therefore, in concluding this section, my respondents looked at the legal and political pressures on practicing tabloid journalists. They also looked at the political intolerance of opposition views and need for legal knowledge. It then went on to look at frequent arrests and imprisonments of journalists, and on the difficulty of deciding between trivial and



important information. Others also looked at the cultural and ethical limitations of the profession and on the politically motivated intimidations.

The section further discussed the impact of tabloid news on citizens and authorities abuse of the fragile legal and political environment. It looked at consequences for the lack of freedom of information and for heavy reliance on sources including ownership challenges on legal and political mechanisms. It explored the impact of vague laws and hostile political landscape on practicing journalists and the suppression of opposition views. It discussed watchdog journalism and the interaction of law and politics. It also looked at news about authorities' privacy and on their abuse of the legal and political power within the context of an emerging democracy. My next section discusses the extent by which the tabloid journalists felt frustrated and liberated in their journalism practice through their personal experiences.

### **5.3. A frustrating and liberating journalism environment**

Tabloid journalists provided varieties of responses on their experiences of frustrations and liberations in the environment they operated. I start by looking at the political allegiance of the tabloid in support of government, then at the polarisation of the media landscape, and the problem of funding resources. Poor working conditions are also discussed including the lack of team working spirit in sharing sources. Institutional frustrations due to political positioning of the tabloid are also highlighted including that of online media censorship. Finally, issues of liberation and passion as motivating factors of tabloid journalism practice are also discussed in considerable depth.

Even though press freedom is tied to the practice of journalists, there are many factors that limit journalists' role in political affairs and in the maturity of democracy (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Chanda, 1998). Limiting factors on tabloid journalists within the broader context of an emerging democracy contribute to their frustration as purveyors of information for the citizens (Kasoma, 1996).

***(a) Political support of the government by the tabloid***

In discussing journalism practice pressures within the tabloid's political allegiance to government support, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) pointed out that the situation was frustrating. He confided affecting his journalism practice especially after 2011 when the tabloid started to support the government. He could not pursue some stories that were critical of government as they were often suppressed by editors (Amsterdam, 2012).

Relevantly, Kasoma (1995) criticise newspapers ardently supporting government of the day arguing often lose the teeth to bite and monitor public decisions that affect ordinary citizens. Ogbondah (1994) too explains that the general public tend to be suspicious of newspapers often supporting government decisions without any critical analysis and leads to loss of respect. Similarly, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) felt that the tabloid was no longer considered by many well-informed citizens as a reliable source of information. She felt that by taking the government's side, its positioning created a dangerous dynamic in the newsroom. She argued that what was passing for news was nothing more than propaganda. She added that the tabloid only provided quotes from government sympathisers. In addition, Audrey Muma (interviewee) suggested that some news items critical of government operations were regularly ignored. Moreover, John Kaputo (interviewee) too felt that the citizens were subjected to heavy propaganda regularly. He stressed that the citizens were deprived of credible information to make independent decisions.

***(b) Polarisation of the media and the problem of funding and salaries***

Polarisation of the media was a major issue which often triggered frustrations as pointed out by many of my respondents (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999). Government media supported the ruling authorities while the private media supported the opposition political parties (Banda, 2007). For example, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) was frustrated that *The Post* known to be a critical watchdog over government became a political supporter (Kasoma, 1997a). She

noted that the tabloid support for government reflected poorly in the style and quality of reporting (Amsterdam, 2012).

In admission, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) acknowledged that the media to a larger extent was polarized. But she defended the tabloid's position arguing that it was informing the public only that it worked under very difficult circumstances. She further defended the tabloid arguing that it could not be blamed because it was a private entity. She noted that it was government's responsibility to inform the citizens properly and not only the private media. She argued that the tabloid could not be blamed for its political positioning because it was a private business.

Interestingly, Altschull (1995) explains that the private media are business entities that serve the interests of the owners before that of citizens. Croteau and Hoynes (2005) too clarifies that all the discussions that the media serves the interests of the general public are mere rhetoric. In many Western countries, tabloids are rarely involved in the provision of a platform for the citizens to share their views (Deuze, 2005). But look out for market interests and promote conditions that can provide more revenues (Conboy & Steel, 2010).

Besides, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) cited the problem of resources as a major factor for the frustrating environment (Banda, 2007). John Kaputo (interviewee) too felt that it was frustrating financially as a journalist working within a very limited budget. He noted that even though it was government's duty to inform the citizens properly, the tabloid was not obliged to cover the entire country. He acknowledged that both the government as well as the private media were equally responsible not to subject citizens to misleading information.

But Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) complained about poor working conditions and pathetic salaries. She explained that the tabloid (1991-2001) was not secure financially and it was frustrating because the morale was low. She narrated that many journalists left the tabloid for financial reasons. Critically, journalists in many African countries often work under very difficult economic conditions which often contribute to poor salaries (Federation of

African Journalists, 2010). For example, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) shared frustrations to inform the citizens effectively because of financial problems. She argued that she worked so hard but was poorly paid which was not good for her motivation. She felt that the poor working conditions made many journalists vulnerable to accepting bribes in exchange for good news coverage of news markers. She narrated that the financial frustrations was one of the major reasons why so many journalists left the tabloid (2011-2012) to take up positions in government.

***(c) Lack of team working spirit especially in sharing sources***

Sources are very instrumental in the shaping of tabloid stories and journalists often hold them dearly and jealously (Deuze, 2005; Bird, 1990). Lack of teamwork in sharing sources was another frustration pointed out by Isaac Mubita (interviewee). He argued that it was not easy pursuing stories and accessing sources. He was initially employed to work at the tabloid's online edition and the mission was to update news regularly and daily. He explained that for the online edition, there was more demand for news throughout the day and night. He argued that the online edition required extra work and sometimes interacting with other journalists from the print section. He narrated that some stories were even given to print teams to pursue but the other side was not often willing to share the sources and news.

He added that it was frustrating working under Joe Kaunda (editor) who required the highest professional standards. He narrated that journalists were allowed to come up with three workable stories each day during diary meetings. He pointed out that sometimes suggestions were easily crushed as not workable news. Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) confirmed that there were political dynamics in the newsroom which were frustrating at times. She noted that some of her workmates protected their sources so jealously (Deuze, 2005). Protection of sources is very critical in tabloid journalism practice because sources are the news markers (Wasserman, 2008; Bird, 1990). Isaac Mubita (interviewee) also

confided that the lack of source sharing made it difficult to get comments from the victims who were often at the centre of allegations.

Generally, good journalism reporting requires collecting comments from the accused as well (Mongonge, 2007). At times, it is difficult to pursue particularly unbalanced news items, which often ends up dropped (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). But often, tabloids rarely drop news items because of lack of balance (Bird, 1990). Normally, tabloid journalists will often publish news items even if there is no balance as long as it could sell to the readers (Deuze, 2005).

However, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) argued that despite the lack of team work, she tried to report news fairly. She noted that the dynamics between journalists, editors, and owners were frustrating at times. In fact, some scholars point out that the frustrations are largely due to expecting journalists to work on the stories in line with the institution framework while avoiding making offence to owners and advertisers (Curran, 2002: 80).

#### ***(d) Institutional frustrations due to political positioning of the tabloid***

Tabloid journalists are often subjected to institutional frustration which Mano (2005) calls 're-orientation of their professional practice' and which tends to undermine the maturity of an emerging democracy (Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1996). Institutional frustrations on the way the tabloid operated professionally in relation to its political positioning were cited by Ernest Mulenga (interviewee). He narrated that there were many political and economic interests that were pursued by the tabloid. He explained that its political interests affected the practice of journalism. He saw the period (2011-2012) the tabloid was supporting government as highly frustrating since critical citizens were suppressed (Amsterdam, 2012).

Debate on newspapers presenting particular ideas and promoting interests of the elite is far from straight forward (Merrill, 1974). Many unanswered questions are on whether press institutions really serve the interests of the general public (Tunstall, 1996). Audrey Muma

(interviewee) was frustrated on the gatekeeping procedures at the tabloid. She noted that the political interests of the tabloid led to many stories go uncovered (Phiri, 1999).

She pointed out that the stories that were critical of government were rarely pursued. She explained that it was frustrating to fail to expose critical stories because of political interests and misplaced loyalties by the tabloid. She gave an example when her editor dropped a news suggestion to investigate corruption allegations against the son of President Michael Sata when the news item was already in public domain. She pointed out that it was frustrating when many citizens knew about an issue but could not read about it (Phiri, 2008).

#### ***(e) Frustrating online media censorship environment***

Online journalism practice caused many frustrations among tabloid journalists because of relentless government censorship within an emerging democracy (Banda, 2010). Other frustrations were on the way the government was censoring critical ideas online by blocking websites (Mwenya, 2012a). For example, John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that it was frustrating on the way the government was making several attempts to clamp down on online news sources that were critical of the government operations (Adam, 2012).

Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) too was frustrated because of government intolerance of opposing and critical citizens online. He felt that the government cracking on online news sources was not good for democracy. Audrey Muma (interviewee) was also frustrated on how the government was looking at ways to monitor online activities. She argued that the attempts to clamp down on critical citizens were not good for the maturity of democracy. She felt that it was shocking that *The Post* kept a blind eye supporting the government initiatives. She explained that there was evidence to show secret services were gathering the Internet Protocol addresses of people that regularly commented on political matters (Adam, 2012). She gave an example of Zambia Media Forum (Online) which was invaded by secret services and some of its online discussants ended up interrogated. She noted that the

government was silencing online news outlets due to lack of control over information (Mwenya, 2012a).

***(f) Liberation and passion as motivating factors of tabloid journalism practice***

Liberation and passion working in journalism was highlighted by tabloid journalists within the broader context of democracy (Kasoma, 1996). According to Inness Nsokolo (interviewee), working as a tabloid journalist was a 'liberating' experience. She felt that liberation and passion made tabloid journalism practice an enjoyable and interesting career. She pointed out that despite the legal and political challenge, serving the general public was of utmost importance.

Journalists' service to the general public is often associated with the importance of information dissemination within an emerging democracy (Kasoma, 1996). Tabloid journalists very often feel obliged to provide citizens with information of reasonable value. It is such obligations that make it easy for journalists to give their lives for the poor and vulnerable citizens (Anderson, 1991). Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) was not afraid to go to jail for the sake of the poor citizens. She explained that journalism practice was all about passion to serve the country and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

Media is often instrumental in either widening or bridging the gap between the different classes in society (Fenton, 2007). Lower classes often tend to be ignored and discredited by the media in modern societies (Anderson, 1991). However, Innes Nsokolo (interviewee) felt that reporting news about ordinary citizens was instrumental and required responsibility. She argued that journalism practice was about passion to work. She narrated that the journalists' responsibility was to expose activities that affected the poor. She argued that when something was not right, she took a decision to investigate. She then reported information for everyone to know and it was within that context that she felt liberated within herself (Kasoma, 1996).

In concluding this section, my respondents looked at the frustrations and liberations by journalists within the environment in which they operated. In this section, I started by looking at the political allegiance of the tabloid in support of government, and then looked at the polarisation of the media landscape. I further looked at the problem of funding resources and then went on to look at the poor working conditions. I also discussed the lack of team work in sharing of sources and the institutional frustrations due to the political positioning of the tabloid. In addition, I looked at frustration on the online media censorship and on liberation and passion as motivating factors of tabloid journalism practice. My next section looks at examples where regulation of the press works well within the context of an emerging democracy.

#### **5.4. Examples where the regulation of journalism works well**

Regulation of the press is often a major controversy within the emerging democracies (Banda, 2007; Phiri, 1999; Chanda, 1998; Chirwa, 1996; Lungu, 1986). It is always very difficult to articulate examples where regulation of journalism works well within an emerging democracy in which journalists are often victims of authoritarian rule (Chama, 2012). I start by looking at arguments in favour and then against government induced regulations, then look at self-regulations. I further look at the need for freedom of information and argue that heavy regulations triggers loss of journalists' ability to watch freely and monitor the government. Finally, I argue that the regulations should be centred on the poor within an emerging democracy.

African leaders very often argue that because of the continent's fragile political and economic landscape including the colonial legacy accompanied by the fragility of emerging democracies, a press completely free from regulation in the Western sense can easily lead to social and political instability and failure for government to function effectively (Ogbonnah, 1994). They claim that the press regulations are necessary for the maturity of democracy and for national development including political stability (Kasoma, 1995).



Debates on the regulation of the media are very inconclusive in many of the scholarly discussions (Banda, 2004; Chanda, 1998). Many complex political, legal and even ownership issues surround media regulation within any emerging democracy (Ongowo, 2011). Institutional conflicts between government and the media also impact on regulations and affect tabloid journalism practice (Makungu, 2004).

***(a) In support and in favour of government induced regulations***

Much critical work indicates that at times, tabloid journalists tend to abuse press freedom because of poor professional standards which triggers government induced regulations (Yoler *et al.*, 2007; Phiri, 1999). Some scholars claim that even the type of press freedom some journalists yearn for at times is not realistic and can be equated to treason in some African countries (Kasoma, 1995). For example, *The Post* (1991-2000) published stories that were equated to sedition and espionage and made the government to argue that there was a danger in allowing too many regulations in favour of the press (Phiri, 1999).

Similarly, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) argued that the press not properly regulated by government could be a danger to democracy. She gave an example of *The Post* that continued to publish alarming stories capable of triggering civil war. She cited the way the tabloid covered the Barotse Land shooting in January 2011 as an example, showing pictures of dead bodies on its front page. Besides, John Kaputo (interviewee) too felt that even if the government was to enact regulations that fostered press freedom and hold authorities accountable, journalists too needed to improve on their professional practices (Phiri, 1999). Accordingly, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) suggested the need for journalists to improve in the quality of reporting or else government regulations were vital to control carelessness in the nature of reporting information (Kasoma, 1996).

Some scholars claim that the press need to be regulated and monitored by government because they can also lie, distort facts, and print outright biased information (Merrill *et al.*, 2001). John Kaputo (interviewee) argued that *The Post* needed to be monitored carefully

with government induced regulations as it tended to ride on the back of the ignorant citizens to pursue its own political agenda (Phiri, 1999).

Moreover, Audrey Muma (interviewee) noted that the government induced regulation were vital and provided a much deeper sense of responsibility on journalists (Banda, 2007; McQuail, 2005). She added that the government inspired regulations were necessary and vital for democracy. But she was also able to argue that if not properly implemented, could lead to suppression of press freedom. She felt that the government induced regulations were necessary if done in the interests of the general public. Similarly, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) argued that the media needed government induced regulations in an emerging democracy (Ogbondah, 1994). He cited *The Post's* behaviour as a good case why the media needed to be regulated by government. He noted that the tabloid was very reckless and often incited the citizens against the government through many of its stories. He concluded that there was a danger to allow the media too much freedom (Kasoma, 1997a).

Many scholars argue that journalists possess too much power but that power comes with responsibility (Chama, 2012; Curran & Seaton, 2010; Banda, 2007). Tabloid journalists are like government authorities and need to guard and protect the freedom of vulnerable members of the community (Wasserman, 2010). But journalists can easily abuse their powers and need brevity to remain people of integrity which is not always easy because of the market and ownership interests (Conboy & Steel, 2010). It is for these reasons that government induced regulations are necessary as they are very often made in the interests of the majority citizens and the common good (Banda, 2007; Kasoma, 1996).

#### ***(b) In favour of self-regulations and against government induced regulations***

In supporting self-regulations and media institutions regulatory boards free from government control (Banda, 2007), Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) explained that there was need for self-regulation. He felt that any decision for publication was for the editors to make within the best interest of the general public and for the core purpose of fostering the maturity of

democracy (Phiri, 1999). Similarly, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) felt that self-regulations by journalists and media institutions was the best but only worked well in situation where journalists truly served the interests of the general public (Manne, 2011). She argued that *The Post* campaigned for self-regulation (1991-2011) and pointed out that it needed to continue its campaigns for the good of journalism practice (Chanda, 1998).

Media regulations are often tied to the professional practice of journalists (Camrose, 1947). John Kaputo (interviewee) saw it difficult for heavily regulated newspapers by government to work well. He noted that South Africa provided a good example until when government criminalised exposure of government excesses – the kind that investigative journalism thrives on (Ongowo, 2011). Audrey Muma (interviewee) too argued that the government often developed regulations that targeted specific newspapers and which suppressed press freedom and democracy.

Furthermore, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) also pointed out that the government regularly threatened the media with more regulations. She argued that there were already plenty of regulations and some of them prohibitive (Berger, 2007). She felt that the regulations needed to be in the best interests of the general public (Global Journalist, 2000). She noted that self-regulations were vital for press freedom and for the maturity of democracy through transparent regulatory bodies and editorial structures (Mano, 2005).

### ***(c) On the need for freedom of information regulations***

Centering regulations on freedom of information was cited by many respondents as necessary within democracy (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007). For example, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) argued that there was need for government to enact freedom of information regulations because of rampant abuse of public resources (Banda, 2007). He added that corruption affected many government institutions and there was need for freedom of information that was able to allow journalists to legally access information on operations in public bodies. He argued that many government authorities were regularly facing corruption

allegations and court cases a clear sign of poor management which needed legal exposure through freedom of information regulation (Banda, 2007)..

In addition, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) argued that it was the government's responsibility to usher in regulations that promoted democracy. She contended that there was no democracy without the free press to legally access information. She felt that the government's decision to regulate the media even more was not good for democracy. She similarly stated that there were no regulations that allowed journalists to access information to allow citizens to make meaningful decisions. She critiqued that there were assurances of taking the Freedom of Information Bill back to Parliament by government, but Vice-President George Kunda (2008-2011) argued that the government was treading carefully on the bill.

Again in 2012, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Amos Malupenga (a former journalist at *The Post*) announced caution before enacting the freedom of information. He argued that the government needed further consultation before going ahead with the plans. But before 2011, the government gave similar reasons when withdrawing the Bill from parliament. In fact, Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that the authorities were using delaying tactics because of lack of accountability in the management of public funds. She narrated that the authorities were uncomfortable to be held accountable by the media (Banda, 2007).

Joseph Sakala (interviewee) too noted that there was need for freedom of information regulations. He added that it was the general public that were suffering due to lack of access to information. He felt that it was difficult for journalists to access information about government operations. He gave an example of situations when the public institutions made news about mismanagement of public funds, but journalists could not access sufficient information. He felt that the government was uncomfortable with freedom of information regulations because it was corrupt. Generally, tabloid journalists often struggle in countries without freedom of information legal protection and tend to be vulnerable to government abuses (Sparks, 1999).

***(d) Good regulations support watchdogs and centre on the poor within democracy***

It is often argued that democracy hinges on good media regulations that monitor government while at the same time support the interests of the vulnerable groups (Phiri, 1999). Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) argued that good regulations were needed to inform the citizens properly. He narrated that citizens needed to know government plans as they depended on the media for information. Similarly, Turner (2000) argues that the heavily regulated media rarely monitor government and tend to avoid dealing with issues that are critical of operations. McNair (2000) too explains that the press that is heavily regulated loses their bite as government watchdogs which impacts negatively on democracy and the culture of transparency.

Furthermore, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) argued that the heavily regulated press was unable to work effectively as watchdogs. He pointed out the difficulties of monitoring government operations effectively by the heavily regulatory press. He felt that to be able to watch-over government effectively the press needed regulations that promoted accountability in government and that encouraged participation by the general public.

On the solutions for the formulation of regulations within democracy, some scholars claim that ordinary citizens need to occupy the centre stage (Banda, 2004). For example, Freedman (2008) argues that good regulations need to monitor government accountability more effectively by putting the needs of the vulnerable citizens at the centre. Isaac Mubita (interviewee) stressed that the regulations needed to touch on vulnerable groups. He argued that the government needed regulations that were not vindictive in character but good for the poor within democracy. He added that the government needed to spearhead regulations that supported the needs of the ordinary citizens. He felt that it was unfortunate for *The Post* that campaigned for regulations since 1991 ceased to champion the message in exchange for political favours (Amsterdam, 2012).

Regulations either by the government or the media institutions or even by journalists themselves need to be centred on the poor citizens (Banda, 2004; Kasoma, 1996). Besides, a truly democratic government should put the poor and the vulnerable citizens at the centre of any regulation formulation (Fenton, 2007). Above all, regulations should be intended to promote democracy and benefit the vulnerable citizens (Freedman, 2008).

My respondents provided different insights on the examples where regulation of journalism works well. I started by first looking at arguments in favour and then against government induced regulations. I then looked at arguments in favour of self-regulations and the need for focusing of regulation formulation on freedom of information. I further looked at arguments that heavy regulations prevent the watchdog role of the media. Finally, I looked at the argument of focusing regulations on the poor and the vulnerable within an emerging democracy.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

The debate on press freedom and factors that impact on journalists' professional practice within democracy is far from straight forward (Phiri, 1999). It is within this context that the Chapter looked at the extracts from interviews on the main roles of tabloid journalists and their political positioning. The Chapter analysed the legal and political pressures in the environment journalists worked and how these issues frustrated and liberated their work. It also looked at whether there are ways regulation of journalism practice worked well in relation to press freedom and to the maturity of democracy. It exposed various conflicts tabloid journalists often encountered when it came to asserting their social responsibilities within democracy. For example, the tabloid had its own institutional predilections that were often dictated by its owner. Furthermore, the legal and political challenges exerted pressure on the work of its journalists and caused fear and distress. In addition, there were professional frustrations that were encountered that affected their level of motivation. Other conflicts were on press regulation and on strengths and gaps in both self-regulations and government induced regulations.

The main issues touched on the political positioning of the tabloid which shifted remarkably and impacted on its professional practice as discussed in the next Chapter. Tabloid journalists touched on legal and political issues and how they impacted on their work. They pointed out that the information that was critical of government operations was often suppressed after 2011, which was not good for democracy. They argued that the tabloid was highly compromised by the government and its owner, which affected their level of motivation. They argued that they were mainly demoralised because they could not pursue critical stories that monitored government accountability. They stressed that the tabloid partnered with the government and received political-appointment in strategic positions. They noted that the government-partnership affected the quality of news. They pointed out that political interest by the tabloid reduced its responsibility in monitoring government operations. They clarified that the call to serve the poor was no longer treasured as the tabloid favoured government interests.

Other issues in the Chapter were that after 2011, the tabloid sensationally praised government interests and intimidated critical citizens. Its journalists pointed out that despite being arrested regularly before 2011, after 2011, they enjoyed coverage while praising government. They argued that there were many favours that the tabloid benefited from the government. They also noted that issues of selective justice, lawsuits, intimidations and culture of fear, continued to affect generally their journalism practice.

Other main issues were with regard to the dangerous newsroom-culture. Many tabloid journalists pointed out that after 2011, the critical information was suppressed, issues highlighted in the next Chapter on professional practice of the tabloid. They pointed out that the poor salaries affected their professional practice and was the reason many talented individuals left the publication to join the government or pursue other careers more lucrative.

They also criticised teamwork as highly lacking and affected their professional practice. They narrated that there was need for passion to survive as a tabloid journalist, especially in an emerging democracy. They argued that despite various frustrations, tabloid journalism was a

liberating profession especially when information was reported objectively. They argued that their practice was affected by many regulations and the culture of intolerance. They explained that there was need for media law reform especially enactment of freedom of information law to enhance general journalism practice and democracy.

Therefore, the critical incident in the Chapter was on the political positioning of the tabloid before 2011 when it was critical of the government and relentlessly exposed corruption, to after 2011 when it joined the government and ceased to monitor accountability. The Chapter highlights a very important scenario that impacted on the professional practice of the tabloid as discussed in the next Chapter.

Consequently, the next Chapter looks at *The Post* and its professional dynamics. It presents findings from tabloid journalists on moments being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession and looks at the professional challenges of tabloid journalists. It looks at the news stories considered best practice in tabloid journalism by themselves, at aspirations for the future of tabloid journalism and the ways tabloids can make progress in practice.



## Chapter VI

### ***The Post* and its professional dynamics**

This Chapter is on *The Post* and its professional dynamics and on moments when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession. It looks at the practice challenges of tabloid journalists through editorial freedom, news considered best practice in tabloid journalism, and on aspirations for the future of the independent tabloid press. It finally looks at ways the tabloid press can make progress in the professional practice.

In a world in which the information superhighway has made journalists practise their profession in a hurry as they strive to satisfy the world's craving for more news, journalism has increasingly been giving way to the expediencies of financial and political competition (Kasoma, 1996:95). Some scholars argue that in emerging democracies, the press seem to be abandoning the noble objective of serving the people (Karikari, 2004; Kasoma, 1996). Other scholars claim that instead of being a 'means to an end', journalism practice is fast becoming an end in itself (Kasoma, 1996). These issues affected *The Post* as discussed in this Chapter within the context tabloid journalism practice.

#### **6.0. Introduction**

*The Post* before joining government support in 2011, it contributed effectively to the culture of public debate. It was an alternative public sphere that engaged with ordinary citizens through sensational reporting (Phiri, 1999). It provided a platform for ordinary people to tell their story, and brought the struggles of their everyday life into the public arena (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, this Chapter presents data that emerged through my interviewees with its journalists organised according to the following professional practice themes:

1. Moments when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession
2. Professional challenges of tabloid journalists: Editorial freedom

3. News considered best practice in tabloid journalism by journalists themselves
4. Aspirations for the future of an independent tabloid press
5. Ways the tabloid press can make progress in their professionalism

The impact of politics on journalism practice within the broader context of an emerging democracy attracts a lot of scholarly debate (Karikari, 2004; Kasoma, 1996; Ogbondah, 1994). Some scholars argue that the divisionism that permeates the practise of journalism today should be rejected as it is professionally unhealthy (Kasoma, 1996). For instance, *The Post's* journalists during interviewes felt that the political dynamics undermed their practice to provide a platform for the poor and the opposition members who could not find it elsewhere (Phiri, 1999). In fact, before 2011, the tabloid was embedded in the community and covered stories from different perspectives (Banda, 2004). It engaged with its struggling readers who lived their everyday realities with frustrations of failed political policies and incompetent leadership (Chama, 2012).

#### **6.1. Moments when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession**

My respondents when discussing moments when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession looked at the development value of journalism practice, and at the provision of the platform for democratic participation of the citizens. Others looked at siding with the poor and the marginalised as a professional value while others felt that alerting and sensitizing the citizens was valuable. Some other respondents saw bridging the gap between the poor and the government and exposing corruption while bearing in mind the ethical considerations and implications as another value of journalism.

In fact, tabloid journalists felt that their profession was valuable despite some scholarly criticisms of tabloids tendency to peddle sensational stories rather than providing information that could contribute to democratic citizenship (Bird, 1990). Generally, some scholars claim that tabloids by effectively depoliticizing their readers and rendering them primarily consumers, they prevent them from being informed citizens (Deuze, 2005). But a counter

argument by cultural studies scholars is that tabloid journalism articulate the politics of the everyday for readers that formal politics are often far removed from their lived experience (Wasserman, 2008).

For instance, tabloid journalists researched by Banda (2004) saw value in their profession but argued that many citizens miss the broader picture of the impact of politics on journalism practice (Banda, 2004). For example, even though *The Post* was initially aimed at the poor (Mungonge, 2007) and enjoyed unprecedented popularity to become the largest selling tabloid in the country, in 2011, it joined ranks with the ruling government (Amsterdam, 2012). It was also accused by many critics and opposition political leaders of undermining the country's emerging democracy (Chama, 2012). For example, it explicitly supported police brutality on the opposition groups and simplistic presentation of victims as misguided citizens (Amsterdam, 2012). Its brazen sexual content also received criticism including its lack of constructive coverage of formal politics that could contribute to the deepening of democracy (Phiri, 2008).

#### ***(a) Development value of tabloid journalism practice***

Generally, African countries undergoing transition from underdevelopment and colonialism to development and democracy often lack the infrastructure, the money and its professional skills including audiences to sustain development and press institutions comparable to those in the developed world (Ochilo, 1993). Consequently, it is within these contexts that journalists often emphasize national building and development task when informing the citizens as valuable while supporting democracy (Kasoma, 1997a; Ogbondah, 1994; Makungu, 2004).

According to Chansa Kabwela (interviewee), journalism was an interesting profession whose responsibility was to contribute to the country's development. Audrey Muma (interviewee) too, argued that journalism was about providing information to citizens that aided development initiatives. It is within this regard that Ogbondah (1994) views development

value of journalism practice within an emerging democracy as very important. He explains that many countries going through transition into democracy often use the press for development mobilization. He stresses that citizens are often involved by the media as 'participants' in development plans (Makungu, 2004; Lungu, 1986).

Media generally play an important value as channels of development and as tools for political mobilisation in emerging democracies (Lungu, 1986). As thus, *The Post* (1991-2011) was an important tool for democratic participation of citizens while at the same time aided development (Phiri, 1999). Unfortunately, the common criticism of the 'development value' of journalism practice is that the government only provide resources to media institutions that support its policies (Makungu, 2004). This was the case with *The Post* as it was often sidelined by government with advertising revenues because of its hardline against poor accountability in public institutions (Phiri, 2008).

#### ***(b) Provision of the platform for democratic participation of the citizens***

The provision of the platform for democratic participation of the citizens is often highlighted as a value by tabloid journalists within an emerging democracy (Banda, 2007; Phiri, 1999). Therefore, *The Post* (1991-2011) was often credited for providing the platform for the citizens to interact (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). Participation and interaction by the citizens through the tabloid was vital (1991-1995) especially when many citizens became disillusioned with government media systems which broke links with their daily struggles (Kasoma, 1996).

Many scholars too argue that the modern media need to provide a platform for the citizens to participate effectively as it is embedded in the power relations (Wasserman, 2008; Phiri, 1999). Others further contend that there is need for the media to create the capacity for the citizens to speak and be heard (Couldry, 2010). They claim that the media need to accommodate the readers as participants in political affairs through the provision of a narrative of their human experience (Anderson, 1991). In addition, the media need to provide accounts of various citizens essential of what makes us human (Couldry, 2010).

Consequently, in emerging democracies tabloids tend to provide the platform for ordinary citizens and often expose their daily struggles effectively (Mapudzi, 2009).

***(c) Siding with the poor and the marginalised***

In emerging democracies, tabloids are so readily accepted in communities because they engage and very often side with human struggles (Matsebatlela, 2009). Some scholars even claim that tabloid journalists often go to the communities where the poor live, and show how they live and then report their findings in a sensational manner to attract public debate (Wasserman, 2008). Tabloids are easily embraced because they expose how the majority poor live (Mapudzi, 2009). They expose human sufferings making them more credible within the communities and more trusted than mainstream government papers (Wasserman, 2010). They cover stories of poverty on one side while on another side, the deceptions by politicians who live in luxury (Ongowo, 2011). For this reason, the poor readers tend to be loyal to tabloids because they regularly provide them with the platform (Wasserman, 2008).

But during my fieldwork (2011-2012), *The Post* only sided with influential ruling politicians. It was an ardent supporter of the government and was no longer on the side of the poor citizens. It joined mainstream government media in news quality and the poor citizens were completely ignored (Phiri, 2008). In this regard, Merrill *et al.* (2001) argue that even though the media are expected to side with the ordinary citizens, they often tend to join ranks with the ruling authorities.

Furthermore, *The Post* by siding with the ruling politicians relates well with what Merrill *et al.* (2001) citing William Greider (1993) calls 'mock democracy' as an underside to the role of the media in democracy. Greider argues that the media can often run the show while ordinary citizens can be left out with no personal ability to participate meaningfully in democratic processes. Ordinary citizens can fail to play the power games in democracy and can become politically impotent. Citizens can remain uninformed about what actually is happening within democracy. For example, *The Post* (2011-2012) too, ignored the ordinary

citizens and became a primary player by only siding with the elites. The tabloid became so influential that what it chose to ignore, the politicians ignored and what it chose to tell the citizens, the politicians responded (Amsterdam, 2012). As thus, Greider wonders why journalists should set a political agenda according to their own peculiar tests. In addition, he criticises the media for virtually abandoning the ordinary citizens and for only siding with the ruling elites and concludes that instead of supporting democracy, journalism has turned its back (Merrill, *et al.*, 2001).

#### ***(d) Alerting and sensitizing the citizens***

In emerging democracies, alerting and sensitising vulnerable citizens is often considered a value in journalism practice (Phiri, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that only by helping to put many issues into the public domain to stimulate change was the only way that he considered journalism as valuable. He noted that through his writing, he managed to get the police and the court to re-arrest and re-try a con artist after he was given a paltry fine and a two-year suspended sentence for illegal business activities. He argued that he exposed a con artist, but after the con artist was convicted, he felt that the sentence was lenient and that there was a miscarriage of justice. He did a two-part series on the case and the con artist was re-arrested and retried in court. He argued that the con artist ended up serving more time in prison. He explained that he was able to alert citizens about fraud and prevented others from being exploited on the account of their own naiveté.

Generally, tabloid journalists in emerging democracies tend to alert citizens and often remind government authorities of their responsibilities towards the citizens (Ongowo, 2011). This point is further echoed by Wasserman (2008) that tabloids sensitise and alert ordinary citizens. He argues that tabloid journalists give ordinary citizens unique information that mainstream daily newspapers tend to ignore (Mapudzi, 2009). He explains that tabloids are the community paper, but just on a bigger scale and try to tell ordinary citizens stories and warn them as well (Wasserman, 2008). Similarly, Mapudzi (2009) asserts that citizens often

go to the tabloids and tell them something that happened, and the tabloids in return, pay attention to their concerns and provide them with a platform.

***(e) Bridging the information gap between the poor and the government***

Tabloids are often well positioned in emerging democracies and tend to bridge the gap between the poor and the government authorities because of their format and style (Wasserman, 2008). According to Audrey Muma (interviewee), she gave citizens a platform that exposed their suffering to the authorities and in so doing, she bridged the gap that existed between the government and the ordinary citizens. She felt that her responsibility in human affairs was to expose the gap between the government and the ordinary citizens that the authorities wanted to ignore (Kasoma, 1996).

Another journalist John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that the various conflicts of interests by the tabloid owner in the political affairs often prevented him from bridging the gap between the government and the ordinary citizens. Similarly, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) felt that she was obliged to bridge the gap in information between the struggles of the poor and the responsibilities of the government (Phiri, 1999).

In addition, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) saw tabloid journalism as well positioned in exposing the lives of the poor and the government deception. She noted that tabloid journalism was also about exposing the gap between the government authorities and the ordinary citizens (Phiri, 1999). She felt that deception by the government impacted on the poor citizens and the information gaps needed to be filled by tabloids (Banda, 2007). Furthermore, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) too pointed out that stories that exposed the government lies were instrumental and bridged the information gap. He argued that the stories were valuable and helped the ordinary citizens to have a closer idea of what the authorities were doing in their name (Phiri, 2008).

***(f) Exposure of corruption and ethical challenges***

The exposure of corruption in government operations is often considered a professional value by journalists in emerging democracies (Phiri, 2008; Altschull, 1995). For instance, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) felt that corruption was rampant in government operations and there was need for anti-corruption journalism campaigns (Phiri, 2008). But some scholars argue that corruption exposure by the media in emerging democracies often tend to present many ethical challenges (Ongowo, 2011). In fact, many ethical issues that affect journalism practice in the exposure of corruption are often on the way they go about in their daily work (Phiri, 2008). Generally, ethics deals with moral decisions and principles and provides tabloid journalists with complex scenarios (Ward, 2006:100). Besides, ethical principles allow tabloid journalists to decide the course of action when faced with specific moral dilemmas (Frost, 2011:10). They provide grounds and principles for right and wrong human behaviour (Sanders, 2003:15). Above all, ethics reflect human values such as courage and self-control in exposing corruption and accountability (Ongowo, 2011).

Some scholars claim that tabloid journalists in the course of their duty deal with the choice between what is moral and immoral (Mapudzi, 2009). They deal with not only moral issues but also and legal challenges regarding the accessing of information and distribution (Ongowo, 2011). Similarly, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) despite acknowledging the value in exposing accountability and in whistle blowing various illicit activities in the government operations, felt that the moral decisions were the norm of the practice. However, he felt that there was value in exposing stories arguing that they attracted a lot of attention. He also noted that ordinary citizens often contacted him with more information about issues that needed to be investigated. He also argued that there was value knowing that citizens were willing to provide more information in the exposure of corruption after running the stories despite ethical challenges.

In discussing the extent by which tabloids provide information for readers that expose corruption, Ongowo (2011) explains that tabloid journalists could either suppress or rescue



information for the ordinary citizens (Wasserman, 2008; Sparks, 2000:9). For example, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), *The Post* rarely reported corruption in government operations because of its political positioning (Amsterdam, 2012). Furthermore, it was also accused of intentionally ignoring allegations against the government in an attempt to get contracts and tenders (Amsterdam, 2012).

But before 2011, *The Post* (1991-1995) was regarded as a tabloid that dug deeper for information on corrupt activities (Banda, 2007). For example, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) noted that the news that ranged from abuse of authority to mismanagement of public funds was often exposed regardless of ethical principles. He added that the tabloid exposed many stories of corruption in government operations. He explained that many citizens looked forward to the tabloid's edition and its relentless exposures (Chirwa, 1996). Similarly, Phiri (2008) explains that corruption in the government operations needs to be exposed by the tabloid regularly which is good for democracy. He further points out that the tabloid need to carry stories that expose the extent by which government officials are engaged in corrupt activities (Chirwa, 1996).

Besides, in discussing the underside to the exposure of corruption in government operations by journalists, Ongowo (2011) explains that very often ethical norms are broken just to expose illegal activities in government. He argues that at times records can be concealed, cameras zoomed on targets, telephone hacked, and generally suspected perpetrators' privacy can be invaded with the core purpose of accessing information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). Generally, it is very difficult to expose corruption in government especially in emerging democracies without breaking ethical norms (Ongowo, 2011). Some scholars even claim that if investigations of corruption and other illicit activities is to be perfect, very little would be known as journalists often shine 'a feeble torch into a large dark cupboard while dealing with tricky people' (Gilligan, 2011).

Therefore, to conclude this section, even though there are many challenges on press freedom and on factors that prevents journalists' from fulfilling their journalism

responsibilities within the broader context of democracy, my respondents were able to articulate from different perspectives moment when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession. Some respondents looked at the development value of journalism practice and on the provision of the platform for democratic participation of the citizens including on siding with the poor. Others saw value in alerting and sensitizing the citizens and on the bridging of the gap between the poor and the government. Other respondents looked at the exposure of corruption while bearing in mind the ethical challenges as valuable. My next section looks at the professional challenges of tabloid journalists and focuses on editorial freedom and on media ownership dynamics within an emerging democracy.

## **6.2. Professional challenges of tabloid journalists: Editorial freedom**

In many scholarly debates, many professional challenges of tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies very often tend to be centred on the quality of news (Kasoma, 1995). Other challenges tend to be on the newsroom culture including editorial freedom from ownership dynamics (Mano, 2005; Phiri, 1999; Lungu, 1986). Therefore, in this section, I start by looking the professional challenges of journalists by focusing on editorial freedom. I then look at the interference by *The Post's* owner on editorial affairs and his tendency to fire journalists, and its impact on fear by editors to make editorial decisions. I also look at editorial and ownership conflicts, and on the pressure of work including editing dynamics. Finally, I look at political partnership of the tabloid as an editorial challenge and on editorial freedom as undermined by the market interests.

Generally, editorial freedom is institutionally difficult to overcome in its totality in emerging democracies (Ogbondah, 1994). Within this regard, Kasoma (1996) explains that in emerging democracy, the citizens usually watch in shock as the media literarily murders those it covers to fulfil its agenda of self-enrichment. Similarly, Karikari (2004) points out that in its haste to clean up society of its scum, the media in itself is in serious need of editorial cleansing. Furthermore, Kasoma (1996) argues that the media has increasingly become the

accuser, the jury, and the judge, all rolled up in one as it pounces on one victim after another in the name of press freedom.

**(a) Editorial freedom and the interference by *The Post* owner**

Many tabloid journalists interviewed highlighted editorial interference by *The Post* owner as a major professional challenge (Yoler *et al.*, 2007). For example, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) narrated that the owner was feared by many editors. She felt that it was difficult to understand how editorial freedom could be achieved when the owner was always undermining editors. She asserted that she was scared to lose her job and it was the major reason for tolerating the owner's patronising behaviour on editorial freedom (Mano, 2005). She gave an example of editorial meetings in which the owner often gave directives regarding the news content and on the quality of sources.

According to Mapudzi (2009), tabloid journalists often tend to fit the news within the framework provided by editors. He further explains that editors know exactly the type of the news they are looking for but merely target sources to prove the credibility of information. But within this context, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) noted that *The Post* owner's offensive language towards the employees instilled fear and contributed to editorial control.

Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) castigated *The Post* owner as arrogant and 'a control freak' in the newsroom who manipulated editors from doing their duties properly. Critically, many owners of media institutions tend to be demonised as arrogant in their behaviour. In fact, Kung (2008) calls it an 'entrepreneurial arrogance' which drives many owners forward creating more enemies than friends along the way. But still, Meyer (1987) acknowledges that even though many journalists claim editorial independence; – owners do intervene even though not often directly. As Audrey Muma (interviewee) confirmed that *The Post* owner sometimes sat in editorial meetings and made editorial interventions (African Media Barometer, 2009). Broadly, few documented evidence show that journalists often prevent owners of media institutions from editorial intervention (Mano, 2005). Moreover, there are

very few journalists who have resigned due to owners' editorial involvement in news content and quality (Altschull, 1995).

***(b) Owner's tendency to fire journalists and its impact on editorial decisions***

Media institutions owners often tend to be major players within the very often elite game of politics and usually get entangled in political affairs through their own publications (Amsterdam, 2012). Therefore, this was the case with *The Post* which was at the centre of my investigation as an enduring publication through various times of political, social, and economic adversities (Phiri, 1999). For example, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) noted that the owner was able to hire and fire journalists in order to pursue personal interests. She pointed out that many journalists were scared to lose their jobs which impacted on fear to make editorial decisions. But Audrey Muma (interviewee) was not bothered by being fired and argued that she made editorial decisions freely. She explained that even editors Joana Ngoma and Chansa Kabwela were not bothered too. She felt that the hard working journalists were not bothered of being fired except lazy one. She also argued that she was aware of the limitations of the profession within the broader context of press freedom in an emerging democracy.

Similarly, Goliath Mungonge (interviewee) too argued that the tabloid was not just firing and hiring but tried to hold on to its hardworking staff. He added that the maintenance of hard working journalists helped the tabloid to grow and perform better. He explained that there was a period when some journalists were supposed to be fired but were maintained because of hardworking which was vital for the success of the publication (Mungonge, 2007).

On contrary, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) noted that the owner was only interested in journalists that were able to pursue stories that were polemic in their thrust. He felt that the owner never supported journalists and stories against his political interests. He added that it was a professional challenge to have media owners that were running on the back of ill-informed editors. Crucially, the conflict between the aspirations of the media owners and

ambitions of journalists often characterise journalism practice (Manne, 2011). Scholarly debates too show that owners, despite claiming to serve the public interests also analyse the market interests in order to survive (Croteau & Hoynes, 2005).

### **(c) Editorial and ownership conflict**

The general relationship between editors and owners in emerging democracies is often one of tension and frustrations characterised by mistrust and deceit or to the very least that of a master and a servant (Mano, 2005; Phiri, 1999; Lungu, 1968). Even though tabloids tend to be believed by many citizens as able to report information of reasonable quality based on independent editorial judgment, it is also vital to accept that ownership influence cannot be discredited (Phiri, 1999).

Owners through their media are capable of providing articles that can smack the worst kind of yellow journalism, where innuendos can replace truth, malice can take the place of reporting and personal motives can masquerade as public interest (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) felt that *The Post's* owner exerted too much dominance on editors. He argued that at times the owner sat in the diary meetings and even drove the agendas. He pointed out that usually the owner suggested even the story ideas and directed journalists on sources and quotes. He further confirmed that the owner other times wrote editorial comments and even edited the entire editorial content. He argued that at other times the owner sat behind some editors and dictated the editorial. He also clarified that when citizens read the long rambling pieces that were often full of vitriol and diatribe but low on logic then the owner was at work.

Critically, Croteau and Hoynes (2005) explain that the controlling quality is typical of many media magnets all over the world. For example, Rupert Murdoch is one of the most powerful media personalities and knows how to combine desire for money and thirst for power. He uses mass media to make profit and exert influence over politicians and journalists (Manne, 2011).

On contrary, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) noted that the owner was not controlling in the editorial affairs but was merely careful and firm. He felt that many journalists misunderstood his qualities and that he was a strong character to survive the political and legal difficulties. He explained that the owner knew what was good for his tabloid and was aware of the consequences. He stressed that the owner operated strategically and went on to argue that even though he quoted the Bible passages in some editorial comments, it did not mean that he was a typical Christian. He pointed out that the owner was able to accommodate atheists, communists and even capitalists ideas. He further acknowledged that even though the owner at times dictated the story lines, it was done in consultation with editors.

Moreover, changing the angle of the news and adding background information by owners is common in emerging democracies (Phiri, 1999). But some scholars feel that the contentious issue is on the nature of information that tend to be deleted or added (Deuze, 2005). Very often, tabloid owners are often accused of distorting information and quoting sources out of context to stress certain points (Wasserman, 2008). They are also often accused of reporting smear campaigns to pursue their own personal agendas (Kasoma, 1997a).

In fact, the conflicts between editorial freedom and the media owner's intervention are often too complex to overcome (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) argued that *The Post* owner was very active in the affairs of news production and editing. He argued that there were times the owner wrote editorial comments that were aimed at particular individuals. He noted that sometimes the editorial comments were even delayed for the owner to analyse. Generally, many respondents confirmed the editorial interference by *The Post* owner over the content of the tabloid. Critically, ownership influence on editorial content was not good for the maturity of an emerging democracy (Phiri, 1999). This was partly because the citizens that depended on the tabloid for information were subjected to information that was published at the mercy of the tabloid's owner (Kasoma, 1997a).

#### ***(d) Pressure of work and editing dynamics***

Pressure of work is often highlighted as a professional challenge which impacts on the professional practice of journalists (Deuze, 2005; Makungu, 2004). For example, Chansa Kabwela (interviewee) revealed that the editorial engagements were highly demanding. She gave a typical day that started as early as 07.50 am. She explained that the diary meeting was at 08:00 am. She argued that in the diary meeting, the news stories were suggested and planned. She added that after the meeting, the reporters went into the field to gather information while editors commenced the day's work. She explained that the work involved collaboration with other editors to edit stories, to change angles in some cases, and to place stories on the pages.

In fact, many scholars claim that during the editing process, tabloid journalists approach stories with a mental framework with the core purpose of making them fit into a particular formula (Mapudzi, 2009; Deuze, 2005; Bird, 1990). Others claim that every morning tabloid journalists sit around the table to decide ways to report on what is available and what to fit in (Deuze, 2005). In the editorial planning, somebody might decide on how to mix all the pieces of information together in order to come out with the proper mixture (Bird, 1990). As John Kaputo (interviewee) argued that editors knew exactly the type of information that they was needed and the key was to get reporters contact the sources to get the desired quotes (Kasoma, 1996).

#### ***(e) Political partnership as an editorial professional challenge***

Tabloids can either enhance or be a danger to an emerging democracy especially when political partnerships are formed (Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1996). In as much as tabloids can allow the citizens to participate on issues that affect their well-being; - their editorial operations have consequential implications on democracy (Manne, 2011). In fact, the political partnership by *The Post* impacted on the editorial practice of the tabloid (Phiri, 1999). For example, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) pointed out that the political

partnership by the tabloid with major opposition politician Michael Sata (2010-2011) affected the editorial practice. She argued that its owner was very bullish and often gave orders on the type of news content. She gave an incident in early 2011 when the owner stormed into the newsroom loudly ordering journalists to cover HH (Hakainde Hichilema) and Barotse Land issue.<sup>25</sup> She explained that all these stories were meant to put pressure on President Rupiah Banda's government. She noted that the stories were meant to campaign for the owner's preferred candidate Michael Sata who was capitalising on the news headlines.

Similarly, Manne (2011) explains that it is common in the United States for the media to partner with political authorities. He argues that the media owned by Rupert Murdoch are often accused of supporting particular politicians by heaping extravagant praises and constantly attacking rivals of the owner's preferred candidates (Kung, 2008).

Therefore, political partnership by *The Post* led to the ignoring of the news that had the potential to embarrass the owner's preferred candidates (Amsterdam, 2012). As thus, the tabloid did not expose scandals in President Michael Sata's (September 2011- September 2012) government (Kimer, 2012). But, as already noted, in October 2012, the tabloid finally published embarrassing stories of abuse of power by Minister of Defence Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba (Kalaluka, 2012). The stories represented a departure from the usual editorial policy of covering up government misconduct (Phiri, 2008).

In addition, Kimer (2012) argues that, interestingly, when *The Post* exposed the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice Wynter Kabimba, was facing abuse of power allegations in the awarding of the contracts to Miombo Investment and Omnia for the supply of fertilizer

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<sup>25</sup> Hakainde Hichilema was the leader of the United Party for National Development while Michael Sata was the leader of the Patriotic Front and all were contenders for 2011 presidential elections. The directive was meant to put pressure on President Rupiah Banda's government. The Barotse Land's inhabitants in Western Province of Zambia were demonstrating for separation from Zambia. For example, in January 2011, the police used live ammunition to dispel demonstrators. Therefore, the directive by the tabloid owner was meant to maximise pressure on the government and to incite anger and dissatisfaction from potential voters (Amsterdam, 2012).



subsidies by the government. Another allegation was on the granting of the licence to Midlands Energy where he was an undeclared shareholder. But suspiciously, *The Post* ignored the allegations that were targeted at Kabimba by other newspapers (Kimer, 2012).

Within this context, John Kaputo (interviewee) revealed that *The Post* owner was building up hopes on the Minister of Justice Wynter Kabimba as the next president. He argued that its owner saw the Minister of Defence Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba as academically and morally handicapped to take over from President Michael Sata. He explained that the daily tabloid was strategically planning and opening up a propaganda campaign for its preferred candidate (Amsterdam, 2012).

In also castigating *The Post* for compromising its editorial ethics by joining government partnership, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) too explained that the editorial freedom was heavily breached by the tabloid's political interests (Mano, 2005). She explained that the owner exerted direct control on editors' decisions regarding news content because of partnerships (Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1996). Generally, some scholars see the political partnering as a danger to democracy and a mockery as well, but as already noted, it is difficult to find completely free editors (Manne, 2011; Kung, 2008).

#### ***(f) Editorial freedom as undermined by market interests***

Editorial freedom is very often undermined by market interests (McManus, 1994). Owners of the media institutions usually consider commercial interests within the professional practice of journalism (Conboy & Steel, 2010). For example, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) argued that the owner oftentimes considered the economic interests when it came to news content. He explained that the owner interfered regularly in editorial freedom. He also noted that the owner considered the economic and political interests and their impact on the positioning of the tabloid.

Generally, media owners often consider market interests while remaining relevant to the citizens (Banda, 2004). Market interests are crucial for the future of any media and particularly newspapers and owners take them into serious consideration (Phiri, 1999). Besides, the political climate also impacts on the market interests of the newspapers which often trigger editorial interference by owners (Chama, 2012).

Tabloids in emerging democracies tend to take seriously into consideration the markets and aim to appeal to everyone especially the working poor (Wasserman, 2008). Although this approach draws a neglected section of the society into the mediated public sphere, it is often done with commercial rather than political objectives (Bird, 1990). In fact, tabloids tend to focus on the man in the blue overall because he represents a desirable market, and by far that is where money is located as big advertisers ranging from cell phones to money loans to cars want to be there (Wasserman, 2008). Therefore, the media owners' interests play a vital role on editorial content and take into consideration market interests before political interests (Phiri, 1999).

But again, because of the market interests, at times tabloid news is often published even when it lacks balanced sources as long as it could sell (Deuze, 2005). With regard to market-driven tabloids, very often profit interests dictate content (McManus, 1994). However, Conboy and Steel (2010) argue that despite the impact of markets and editorial interventions, the media should emphasize on educating the general public and representing their interests.

To conclude this section, my respondents were able to articulate the professional challenges of journalists from various perspectives by focusing on editorial freedom, interference by *The Post* owner, and owner's tendency to fire journalists and its impact on fear to make editorial decisions. Others were also able to articulate editorial and ownership conflicts, and on the pressure of work that included editing dynamics. Other issues articulated were on the political partnership as an editorial challenge, and on editorial freedom as undermined by market interests. My next section looks at news considered best practice in tabloid

journalism by journalists themselves and focuses on investigatory journalism within an emerging democracy.

### **6.3. News considered best practice in tabloid journalism by journalists themselves: Investigative journalism**

Tabloid journalists are often credited for exposing fraud and corrupt activities in emerging democracies through sensational language and pictures which appeal to different sections of the society (Ongowo, 2011; Phiri, 2008; Ogbondah, 1994). In this section, my respondents provide information and insights on news that was considered best practice in tabloid journalism by journalists themselves focusing on investigative journalism. I begin by looking at stories that expose illegal activities using sensational language, then the stories that provide an index of dissatisfaction in society. I also look at investigatory stories that promote the culture of transparency. Other stories are those centred on the poor with their vulnerability and on stories that inform and attract readers and sales. Finally, I end with the stories that are objective in character as the best journalism practice.

Scholarly debates suggests that tabloids play a critical role in emerging democracies as they tend to unearth theft, corruption, bribery, smuggling and other illicit economic ventures that are dominant among the bourgeois class (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007; Ogbondah, 1994:1). Others claim that tabloids through sensational stories and pictures are able to expose financial mismanagement in public institutions (Ongowo, 2011; Makungu, 2004).

#### ***(a) Stories that expose illegal activities using sensational language***

A common criticism against tabloids in Western countries is the tendency to peddle sensational information rather than providing news that could contribute to democracy (Bird, 1990; Fiske, 1989). Some scholars even criticise tabloids for often publishing smear campaigns against political opponents and ignoring important political news (Deuze, 2005).

Others often criticise tabloids for playing in the entertainment side than providing serious political news (Gripsrud, 2000; Bird, 1990).

But tabloids are not only in existence to be demonised (Wasserman, 2008) as they provide information that attract various sections of the society who are equally important. For example, Ongowo (2011) sees them as major players in exposing corruption and other illicit activities in emerging democracies. Similarly, Phiri (2008) explains that tabloids are well positioned within the anti-corruption journalism as their tendencies to use sensational language attract authorities and readers to react and take serious actions.

In this regard, John Kaputo (interviewee) noted that stories considered best journalism practice aimed to show far-reaching implications on government spendings. He cited stories that exposed corruption activities in government and that questioned government operations and falling living standards among citizens (Phiri, 2008; Makungu, 2004). Besides, Audrey Muma (interviewee) saw stories that exposed mismanagement of public funds and that questioned government decisions as very important. She narrated that tabloid journalists were well positioned because of the nature of the news format and style in exposing illegal activities than the mainstream media (Ongowo, 2011).

Generally, through naming and shaming, tabloid journalists expose illegal activities in the government operations effectively within emerging democracies (Kasoma, 1996). Sensational stories on the government officials are instrumental in holding leaders to transparent accountability (Phiri, 2008). For example, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) explained that many of the stories she reported of illegal activities were later pursued by the government after the exposure (Banda, 2007).

Furthermore, Audrey Muma (interviewee) too saw stories that exposed illegal government operations using sensational language as best practice in tabloid journalism. She cited stories that commenced as making an allegation then ended up uncovering deep illegal

activities to the point of leaving the perpetrators embarrassed with no courage to sue whistle blower journalists as the best journalism practice.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, whistle blower journalism was new in many emerging democracies (Ongowo, 2011; Phiri, 2008). But many tabloids through whistle blowing exposed a lot of illegal activities in the government regularly (Banda, 2007). Generally, whistle blowing was instrumental in exposing abuses by journalists in public institutions (Ongowo, 2011). As Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) noted that it was whistle blowing that led to the exposure of the Minister of Tourism and Arts, Sylvia Masebo (2011-2012) for appointing nine board members for the Zambia Wildlife Authority without following government procedures.

***(b) Stories that provide an index of dissatisfaction in society***

Tabloids very often appeal to the community of ordinary citizens within the emerging democracies and provide a platform for them to share an index of their dissatisfaction (Wasserman, 2008). According to Fiske (1989), a tabloid should be read as an index of dissatisfaction in society particularly among those who feel powerless to change their situation. It should be read as containing a political message, even though not in the form associated to rational public sphere of the official media. Tabloid journalists too should expose an “index of the extent of dissatisfaction in the society among the powerless” (Fiske, 1989:117). Similarly, Wasserman (2008) explains that tabloids should encompass all the struggles of ordinary citizens who are often confined to the margins of the society and who tend to be usually ignored by the mainstream media.

Therefore, Audrey Muma (interviewee) noted that stories that captured human suffering in their totality were very important. She added that the stories that exposed unimaginable

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<sup>26</sup> There was no law that protected whistle blowers and oftentimes journalists operated at their own risk. In addition, there was no freedom of information law to help expose the government operations. As with regard to freedom of information, *The Post* campaigned for this law since 1991. In June 2012, the Freedom of Information Bill was supposed to be presented to the House of Parliament but was suspended within the same month citing further consultations by the government.

human suffering in their totality among ordinary citizens were the best journalism practice (Mapudzi, 2009). As Wasserman (2008) explains, the ordinary citizens in emerging democracies often phone tabloid journalists about their suffering who then make quick follow-up and report information for the government to react.

In addition, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) argued that the stories that reflected a true nature of ordinary citizens and their impoverished lifestyles were considered best practice in tabloid journalism (Phiri, 1999). In fact, some scholars claim that true stories often emerge after collecting a lot of information in form of scripts, audio, and even video footage (Deuze, 2005). But still, others argue that all massive information cannot be reported in a newspaper (Ongowo, 2011). Consequently, tabloid journalists re-assemble information according to their taste (Bird, 1990) with the major focus on the readers to interpret the story and make their own judgement (Mano, 2005).

Moreover, in presenting an index of dissatisfaction in society, tabloid journalists never just make things up (Deuze, 2005). They do research on stories to get facts right (Wasserman, 2008). It is only that they tend to write in an exciting and sensational manner (Bird, 1990). In addition, they tend to utilize all available information and include pictures to enhance the stories (Mapudzi, 2009).

### ***(c) Investigatory stories that promote the culture of transparency***

Investigative stories in tabloid journalism practice often expose the more powerful to the less powerful in society (Sparks, 1999:6). In fact, many tabloid journalists justify their investigative stories on the public's right to know even if such stories might turn out to be contested by the people mentioned (Kasoma, 1996). Other scholars claim that investigative tabloid journalism practice should be based on the idea of virtuous conduct that facilitates the democratic process and that serves the public interest (Ongowo, 2011).

Therefore, investigatory stories were mentioned by Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) as good journalism practice. She cited investigating a government cabinet minister who was involved in illegal business activities and she even provided detailed background information of the corruption scandal. She was impressed that the minister was fired by President Frederick Chiluba. Generally, investigatory stories often cause emotional, physical, financial, and even reputational harm to the victims (Silwamba, 2013). But again the same stories lead to the culture of transparency and help to set the record straight (Phiri, 2008). Moreover, such stories heavily equip ordinary citizens with information which is good for democracy (Phiri, 2008). Similarly, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) also cited investigatory stories that started as ordinary news but ended-up digging deeper into issues bringing out the entire truth into the public domain to merit further investigation by authorities as the best journalism practice.

Critical analysis show that the growing interest in investigatory journalism by tabloid journalists was due to continuous mismanagement of public funds by government authorities (Banda, 2004). For instance, tabloid journalists regularly investigated massive corruption (1991-2001) that surrounded the privatisation of the country's mines under President Frederick Chiluba. Furthermore, tabloid journalists exposed the abuses in the selection of mining bidders without even any extensive mineral extraction experience (Banda, 2007). In addition, tabloid journalists investigated regularly President Rupiah Banda's (2008-2011) abuse of funds especially in diverting money into political campaigns that was meant for the ordinary citizens (Chanda, 2013).

Similarly, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) revealed that stories that investigated the government operations were considered best journalism practice and that provided the citizens with information of what the authorities were doing in their name. He argued that since journalists represented the general public, it was vital to keep a critical eye on authorities to serve them effectively. He added that the best stories were able to inform the ordinary citizens on how their funds were being managed by their leaders within democracy (Phiri, 2008).

**(d) Stories centred on the poor and that attract readers and sales**

In tabloid journalism practice within emerging democracies, stories that are centred on ordinary citizens and that provide a platform for the poor are often considered good journalism practice (Wasserman, 2008; Phiri, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). According to Ongowo (2011), stories of vulnerability among the poor citizens are crucial in holding the government accountable (Phiri, 2008). It is for this reason that the poor citizens need to be educated and be informed properly as they are more likely to suffer the abuses (Conboy & Steel, 2010).

Even though stories about the poor are considered best journalism practice in emerging democracies (Kasoma, 1996), stories should also be attractive to the readers to sell newspapers (McManus, 1994). But again, total market-driven journalism is often demonised by many authors as an embarrassment to the journalism profession because it tends to turn citizens into objects of money making (Merrill *et al.*, 2001; McChesney, 1999). For example, I noted that *The Post* (2011-2012), abandoned the ordinary citizens in preference to market interests (Amsterdam, 2012). Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that stories needed to be attractive to the readers and also be able to sell tabloid editions as best journalism practice. He critiqued that even though citizens needed information, but the tabloid also needed income to survive (Banda, 2004). In addition, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) too argued that stories needed to inform citizens but also needed to benefit from sales (Banda, 2004).

In many scholarly debates on tabloid journalism, the common perception is that tabloids often excel well in the entertainment than in the information industry (Wasserman, 2010; Deuze, 2005; Bird, 1990). In Britain, for example, Rooney (1998) claims that the *Sun* dominates the newspaper market in sales and advertising space. Besides, apart from the entertainment argument, it is impossible to sustain an argument that the *Sun* channels rational discourse which allows citizens to come together as a public body to form reason-based public opinion (McManus, 1994). Moreover, it is difficult to sustain an argument that the *Sun* fulfils a role as part of a mechanism by which ordinary citizens are able to bring their political representatives to account (Sparks, 2000). Generally, the function of the *Sun* is



mainly commercial and its political role is essentially passive. In fact, it only encourages conditions that can best maximise its profits (Rooney, 1998).

But this argument by Rooney (1998) could not be said of *The Post* which operated as a channel of political discourse and as an entertainment publication as well (Phiri, 1999). Besides, despite Kasoma (1996) castigating the tabloid as having abandoned the citizens for market interests, being private, it was not obliged to stick with the poor and to abandon market interests (Banda, 2004; McManus, 1994). It was a private business entity with its own political and market interests (Amsterdam, 2012).

#### **(e) *Objective and factual stories***

Objectivity and related issues of factuality in journalism practice attract many scholarly discussions and debates (McNair, 2000; Phiri, 1999; Chirwa, 1996). In emerging democracies, objective stories are often considered best journalism practice by many journalists (Phiri, 2008; Kasoma, 1996; Lungu, 1986). In fact, as already signalled, objectivity is usually considered a central 'strategic ritual' of journalism, which although increasingly under fire, is still a cornerstone of the profession (Biressi & Nunn, 2008:254). For example, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) argued that objective stories demonstrated best journalism practice by allowing both sides in the story to be given a fair platform (Chama, 2012).

Generally, objectivity requires journalists to give attention to details, evidence, and even events in news production (Deuze, 2005). But unfortunately, objectivity is mainly just a professional ideal which is difficult to realise by journalists when it comes to practice (Allan, 2004). For example, Audrey Muma (interviewee) argued that even though objective stories were considered the climax of good journalism practice, it was largely compromised at *The Post* by its owner because of political interests (Kasoma, 1996). She felt that even though objectivity was vital in order to provide information of reasonable quality (Deuze, 2005), it was difficult to maintain good journalism standards at the tabloid (Amsterdam, 2012).

Some scholars claim that objective stories encompass accuracy and fairness while publishers are ready to take responsibility (Moorhouse, 1964:86). Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) despite being aware of the value of objectivity was as a necessary virtue and a best journalism practices in fashioning stories, acknowledged that at *The Post*, at times some stories lacked balanced quotes because of political interests (Phiri, 1999). Further scholarly discussions show that in tabloid journalism, achieving objective stories as a best journalism practice is a matter of political and economic debate (Wasserman, 2010; Kasoma, 1996; Bird, 1990). For example, tabloid journalists are known to publish stories that often tend to lack objectivity as long as they are able to sale editions especially in emerging democracies (Wasserman, 2012; Phiri, 1999).

In conclusion, in articulating news that was considered best practice in tabloid journalism by journalists themselves, my respondents cited many factors that hindered their practice within the context of an emerging democracy (Ogbondah, 1994). In this section, I highlighted stories that exposed illegal activities using sensational language, and that provided an index of dissatisfaction in society. I also looked at investigatory stories that promoted the culture of transparency and that were centred on the poor with their vulnerability. Others were those that informed and attracted readers with sales and also objective in style. My next section discusses aspirations for the future of independent tabloids within an emerging democracy.

#### **6.4. Aspirations for the future of independent tabloids**

Journalists in emerging democracies usually tend to aspire for press freedom and favourable legal and political conditions (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2007; Makungu, 2004). But Kasoma (1996) argues that the level of freedom some journalists even aspire for in emerging democracies especially tabloids can be equated to treason (Chanda, 1998; Lungu, 1986). Therefore, in this section, I start by looking at aspiration for total press freedom and then from political partnership. I also look at media law reforms especially ones able to promote the sustainability of tabloids. Other aspiration includes freedom from editorial interferences and from ownership controls. I further look at protection of journalist from political violence

and for socially responsible journalism that builds democracy. Finally, I look at promotion of online journalism and journalism practice of self-criticism and self-reflection while focusing on the insights by *The Post* owner.

In emerging democracies, many people aspire for journalism practice able to assist in the development of the country (Ogbondah, 1994). Many scholars too, are of the view that tabloid journalism practice should aid development initiatives (Phiri, 2008; Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996). In fact, many emerging democracies are in serious and urgent need of development (Kasoma, 1996). Besides, political leaders very often tend to mismanage the resources vital to improve the level of modernization as well as the overall social and material well-being of the generality of the people (Phiri, 2008). It is within these contexts that many journalists aspire for the future that is comparable to that of Westernised countries (Kasoma, 1996). Moreover, and unfortunately, almost every leader sees the state as a means for private capital accumulation and way to make their fortune while suppressing opposition views (Ogbondah, 1994). This in turn tends to expose journalists to arrests and intimidations for obstructing the interests of the ruling elites (Chama, 2012).

#### ***(a) Desire for total press freedom***

One key aspiration for many journalists in emerging democracies is that of press freedom (Phiri, 2008; Chirwa, 1996; Chanda, 1998). For example, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) felt that there was need for the government to provide an environment that was politically and legally conducive for press freedom. Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) too, aspired for press freedom from partisan, commercial, and political interests. He felt that any paper that affiliated with an entrenched position and agenda was a danger to democracy and to press freedom.

Scholarly discussion by Altschull (1984) too shows that press freedom is important within the broader context of democracy but difficult to achieve. It is impossible for any newspaper to be totally independent of commercial interests (McManus, 1994). In fact, commercial

interests are critical to the survival of any newspaper and it is difficult to sustain an argument that any privately owned newspaper can survive without such partnerships (Banda, 2004). Even though some newspapers can manage to ignore partisan politics but commercial interests are imperative to their survival (Rooney, 1998).

*The Post* (1991-2011) too was largely sustained by partnership with commercial interests (Mungonge, 2007). Commercial imperatives largely and heavily impacted on the tabloid (Banda, 2004). Its future as well was largely dependant on advertising revenues (Phiri, 2008). It was further commercially partnering in transportation and real estates (Mungonge, 2007). Therefore, it is generally difficult to sustain an argument that the press can be completely free from commercial and political interests (Manne, 2011).

#### ***(b) Avoidance of political partnership and for media law reforms***

Political partnerships and media law reforms are critical for the future of the independent newspapers in emerging democracies (Phiri, 2008). For instance, newspapers that support the government tend to have a guaranteed future by winning political favours (Kasoma, 1997a). But citizens too tend to be critical of publications that support the government interests relentlessly (Kasoma, 1995). In the case of *The Post*, its switch to governmental allegiance (2011-2012) impacted upon its journalists ambitions for a more thoughtful and democratised set of reforms that were able to enhance press freedom.

During my fieldwork (2011-2012), the aspirations of tabloid journalists were high while opposition leader Michael Sata (2008-2011) politically campaigned to reform media laws that were contrary to press freedom. But unfortunately, Sata could not honour the campaign promises after becoming the country's leader citing the need for patience and prudence with reforms (Chama, 2012). Within this regard, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) saw the failure to honour promises by the government as an assault on press freedom.

He argued that the government needed to reform the media laws urgently to guarantee the future of independent newspapers and more particularly tabloid journalism. He felt that the ruling political party needed to deliver on its campaign promises by reforming media laws.<sup>27</sup> He explained that to guarantee the future of tabloid journalism, the government needed to provide a political and legal environment that was conducive for the varieties of publications (Kuwema, 2011a).

***(c) Need for the media laws that promote sustainability of tabloids***

According to Banda (2004), the question of newspapers survival within emerging democracies is also accompanied by the question of financial sustainability. In fact, law, politics, and markets are all critical for the business of newspapers (Makungu, 2004). Therefore, within this context, Audrey Muma (interviewee) felt that the government needed to enact laws that promoted the sustainability of independent newspapers in the country (Banda, 2004). She argued that many independent newspapers struggled with prohibitive printing costs and there was need for government to develop laws that favoured small-scale publications to guarantee the future of many tabloids (Banda, 2005). She also added that the economic situation was not conducive for the tabloid journalism. She pointed out that it was easy to register a publication but difficult to sustain it because of prohibitive costs. She felt that the future of many tabloids depended on government to provide conditions that were able to make printing and publishing cheaper (Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996).

Apart from publishing costs, advertising was also critical for the future of tabloids in emerging democracies (Banda, 2004). For example, many advertisers favoured publications with wider distribution (Phiri, 2008). Government too, often favoured advertising in its own

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<sup>27</sup>There were promises by the opposition leader Michael Sata to enact freedom of information law to allow journalists to access information from public bodies. The law was to help expose corruption in the government operations (Chanda, 1998). There were further promises to enact a new Constitution and remove archaic laws that suppressed press freedom. Furthermore, there were promises to scrap-out some sections of the Public Order Act arguing that they were not conducive for democracy. In addition, there were promises to revise the immigration and deportation laws that threatened foreign journalists with deportation. However, since coming into power in 2011, none of the promises came into reality (Amsterdam, 2012).

newspapers while sidelined independent newspapers (Banda, 2004). It was also stressed by many scholars that advertisers were crucial for the survival of newspapers in emerging democracies (Phiri, 2008; Banda, 2005).

Drawing broader insights from the phone hacking scandal in Britain, even though phone hacking led to the closure of the tabloid *News of the World* by its owner Rupert Murdoch, the final nail came on the day major advertisers withdrew advertising revenues (Manne, 2011). For example, on July 10, 2011, after 168 years, the tabloid finally closed-down with its last front page headline, 'Thank You & Goodbye,' a week after major advertisers boycotted advertising in the tabloid.<sup>28</sup>

Following the closure of the tabloid, The Leveson Inquiry set up to look into culture, practices and ethics of the press found that there was need to re-evaluate the relationship that existed between the media and the politicians which was a matter of serious concern and which affected citizens (Leveson, 2012). It felt that at times the press enjoyed closer relationships with the politicians and this was the reason the media felt above the law and were able to put other citizens' lives under so much stress and anguish. It further concluded that the closer relationships with the politicians by the media were a political and ethical concern and needed to be re-evaluated (Leveson, 2012).

#### ***(d) Freedom from editorial interferences and ownership controls***

It is difficult to find an editorial team that is completely free from ownership interferences in emerging democracies (Mano, 2005). It is within this regard that Inness Nsokolo

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<sup>28</sup> The Leveson Inquiry was set up to investigate the culture, practices and ethics of the press. The report came out on November 29, 2012, and was presented to Parliament under Section 26 of the Inquiries Act (2005) of Britain. It dealt with concerns about the press and covered the press relations with the public, with the police, with politicians and, as to the police and politicians, the conduct of each. It carried with it authority provided personally by the Prime Minister. It required Lord Justice Leveson to consider the extent to which there was a failure to act on previous warnings, the way in which the press was regulated, and how regulation was to work in the future (Leveson, 2012).

(interviewee) aspired for an editorial freedom from ownership control. She felt that editors needed to be free to take editorial decisions without ownership intervention than what was the case at *The Post*. She explained that for the future of independent newspapers to be guaranteed, editors needed to be allowed to do their job without any interference. She felt that allowing owners to dictate the content in the newspapers caused problems for journalists and led to the short life span of many publications (Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996).

But according to Kasoma (1996), at times regular ownership intervention in the editorial affairs can be justified for professional sanity in the newsroom. In this regard, I provide an example of the *News of the Word* to which its owner Rupert Murdoch argued that he was not aware of the editorial activities including the hiring of two rogue investigators Clive Goodman and Glenn Mulcaire with the core purpose of intercepting phone calls of celebrities (Leveson, 2012).

#### ***(e) Protection of journalist from political violence***

Journalists working for independent tabloids are often victims of political violence in emerging democracies (Chama, 2012). This is partly because of tendency to expose corrupt interests of the ruling elites (Phiri, 2008). It is within this context that Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) aspired for the total protection of journalists by the government from politically motivated violence in order to guarantee the future of independent newspapers. She felt the government needed to develop more deterrent legal measures to protect tabloid journalists (Chanda, 1998).

She cited the period under President Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) as when many journalists suffered heavy abuses and were often brutalised. She also cited President Levy Mwanawansa (2001-2008) as highly intolerant of journalists that questioned the government decisions. She noted too that under President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001), journalists

were regularly attacked and assaulted. She felt that journalists needed legal and political protection to enhance press freedom and to guarantee the future of tabloid journalism.

According to Global Journalist (2000), the hard line often taken by independent newspapers in exposing corruption in the government operations expose tabloid journalists to political attacks (Banda, 2007). In fact, very often in retaliation, the government authorities tend to use political cadres to attack tabloid journalists (Chirwa, 1996). The regular attacks are meant to prevent the tabloids from critical coverage of corruption (Phiri, 2008).

Generally, attacks on tabloid journalists in emerging democracies are meant to lower their level of investigations in exposing corruption scandals (Moore, 1991). Regular attacks also often lead to the closure of many independent newspapers prematurely (Banda, 2004). Similarly, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) desired for the government to develop laws that were able to curb violence against tabloid journalists. In addition, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) narrated that the future for tabloid journalists to be guaranteed, there was need for policy markers to provide conditions able to make it conducive to report news without fear of being attacked and assaulted than what was the case. Critically, it was evident that many tabloid journalists aspired for legal protection by the government from political violence (Amsterdam, 2012). In fact, the lack of legal protection of journalists led to many independent newspapers to struggle to survive and to operate under the veil of fear and victimisation (Chama, 2012).

#### ***(f) Need to protect tabloids in democracy***

Tabloids in emerging democracies are always at the centre of major political and legal controversies (Wasserman, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). In fact, many tabloid journalists I interviewed aspired for legal protection within the broader context of democracy (Chama, 2012). For example, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) felt that the government needed to create an environment that was suitable for tabloids to flourish. He explained that the government



needed to protect tabloid journalists from unrealistic law suits. He was critical of the emerging trend which he felt threatened the future of tabloids.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) saw the need for the government to consider public interests seriously and added that the citizens deserved varieties of information sources. He felt that only the government with a hidden agenda was uncomfortable to encourage vibrant independent newspapers comparable to Western countries. He felt that the independent tabloids too, were vital for tackling issues of poverty, education, illiteracy, housing and education (Kasoma, 1996).

In this regard, Phiri (1999) explains that democracy is based on the assumption that the vibrant press is essential to ensure public participation. Besides, the government is obliged within the broader context of democracy to provide conditions that foster independent newspapers and that guarantee their future (Chama, 2012).

#### ***(g) Socially responsible journalism within nation building and democracy***

True democracy provides suitable conditions for independent newspapers to flourish (Wasserman, 2008). Therefore, John Kaputo (interviewee) argued that socially responsible journalism too was able to guarantee the future of tabloid journalism. He also explained that it was essential to be aware that to a large extent, many independent newspapers often closed-down because of editorial irresponsibility (Phiri, 1999).

In fact, socially responsible journalism is often regarded as able to put the plight of the vulnerable citizens at the centre of social-economic and political debates (Kasoma, 1996).

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<sup>29</sup> On June 29, 2012, Chief Registrar of Societies Clement Andeleki sued tabloid *Daily Nation* editor Richard Sakala for defamation and claimed over US\$200,000 in damages. Furthermore, President Michael Sata sued the same editor for defamation following the newspaper edition of May 16, 2012 which argued that he awarded a multimillion contract to a family friend to renovate the State House and demanded US\$266.667 in damages (Mwenya, 2012b).

For example, Audrey Muma (interviewee) felt that apart from the legal debates, the future of tabloids also depended on consciously being aware of the struggles of the ordinary citizens. In this regards, Anderson (1991) relates nation building to socially responsible citizenship arguing that it obliges and requires each member of the same community to be indebted to each other through actions.

Some scholars further claim that in an emerging democracy, socially responsible journalism builds a nation and is able to expose social inequalities and exploitations that are prevalent (Kasoma, 1996; Anderson, 1991). Other scholars stress that it is within this context that in emerging democracies newspapers need to consider the value of nation building in the provision of information (Chirwa, 1996; Lungu, 1986). Besides, the government too, need to provide conditions that help to inform citizens properly and adequately (Phiri, 1999).

In addition, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) argued that the future of the independent newspapers and particularly tabloids hinged on the government to provide conditions that promoted varieties of publications (Amsterdam, 2012). Similarly, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) too suggested that the independent newspapers and tabloids inclusive needed to work with each other and needed to support the government when necessary and to criticise if things went out of hand (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999; Lungu, 1986).

#### ***(h) Need to promote online journalism***

Online journalism practice in emerging democracies very often creates a lot of problems with the government authorities due to its nature of information dissemination (Banda, 2010). In fact, many tabloid journalists interviewed aspired for the future of the independent newspapers and tabloids in particular to seriously consider online journalism (Mwenya, 2012a). For instance, during my fieldwork (2011-2012), tabloid journalism through online platform was emerging rapidly in the country (Adam, 2012). A lot of independent newspapers that operated online filled the information gap that was left by *The Post* when it joined the government support (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, Inness Nsokolo

(interviewee) felt that the Internet provided a good opportunity for newspapers that struggled to operate in print format. But she questioned as to whether such online publications were playing a critical role in democracy. But still, she castigated the government authorities for continuously threatening online publication (Adam, 2012).

Broader scholarly debates show that in emerging democracies, the ruling governments tend to be uncomfortable with online newspapers and often develop mechanisms to control the diffusion of information.<sup>30</sup> For example, as already signalled, during my fieldwork, the Media Institute of Southern Africa was concerned with the government threats that were aimed at crippling varieties of online publications (Adam, 2012). However, even though online journalism had its own challenges, it was vital for the future of tabloids and beneficial for the promotion of independent newspapers (Banda, 2010). Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) felt that the future of online newspapers looked favourable even though the government was controlling information by blocking critical websites (Mwenya, 2012a).

A case in point is when the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Office of the Registrar of Societies in 2012 cancelled the certificate of registration of the tabloid *Zambian Watchdog* and blocked its website in the country (Mwenya, 2012).<sup>31</sup> Generally, deregistration threats of critical newspapers were very common (Hamasaka, 2008). For example, before 2011, *The Post* (1991-2010) was always threatened with deregistration whenever it criticised the government relentlessly.<sup>32</sup> Its online edition was at one time closed-down in 1996 by the

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<sup>30</sup> On July 23, 2012, Minister of Defence Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba issued a one week ultimatum to close all online newspapers that published articles that President Michael Sata travelled to India for medical treatment in secrecy. Similarly, Minister of Justice Wynter Kabimba threatened to shut-down websites that were critical of the government. Furthermore, the government was cracking down on online newspapers and many were facing defamation lawsuits. There was at least one civil servant that faced conviction each month for posting what the government considered irresponsible contributions to online platforms (Mwenya, 2012a).

<sup>31</sup> Chief Registrar of Societies Clement Andeleki was very annoyed with the reports that were published by the online tabloid and accused it of involvement in criminal activities. In fact, online newspapers were able to expose corruption activities in government operations (Adam, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> During the 2008 presidential elections, the tabloid suffered many threats from the government. In fact, the government threats were attributed to the highly anti-corruption

government for revealing plans to hold the referendum to change the Constitution (Chama, 2012). In fact, modern democracy requires the government to develop laws that promote online journalism and that provide varieties of information dissemination (Banda, 2010). For example, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) complained that many online newspapers were often blocked in the country which was not good for modern democracy (Adam, 2012).

It was clear that the Internet was slowly changing tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies (Mwenya, 2012b). Moreover, newspapers in print format were competing relatively well with online publications (Banda, 2010). Therefore, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) suggested that there was need for the independent newspapers to intensify their online presence and be able to provide varieties of information. But she was also able to acknowledge that the social inequalities restricted access to online newspapers (Banda, 2010).

In addition, John Kaputo (interviewee) saw the need for the government to legally protect the independent newspapers and particularly tabloids. He cited the *Daily Nation* that was facing various charges from ruling politicians as a draw back.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) pointed out that the future of tabloids was very precarious and needed legal protection (Chama, 2012). He aspired for the government to develop and reform media laws in order to guarantee the future of the independent tabloids (Chirwa, 1996).

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stance it took. *The Post* suffered threats of closure if the ruling party won the re-election. Its journalists suffered numerous incidents of harassment from the ruling party cadres (Hamasaka, 2008:114).

<sup>33</sup> President Michael Sata sued the *Daily Nation* owner Richard Sakala for defamation of character. The Minister of Defence Geoffrey Mwamba too sought an injunction to restrain the tabloid from publishing articles that were critical of the government. In addition, he demanded millions of dollars as compensation for defamation (Mwenya, 2012b).

**(i) Self-criticism and self-reflexivity**

During my fieldwork (2011-2012), I was intrigued by the observation that was made by *The Post* owner Fred Mmembe on press freedom and journalism practice within democracy while making a presentation on 'Leadership in Africa' on July 20, 2012, at a media forum ahead of 'CNN Multi Choice African Journalist Awards' that African journalists needed to seek good journalism and strive for excellence (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012). The media forum was attended by media practitioners from across the African continent. During a panel discussion on 'Ethics in Journalism', journalists were challenged to defend the practice of journalism whenever and wherever it was threatened as it was the greatest right in the world (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012; Makungu, 2004; Chirwa, 1996; Lungu, 1986).

*The Post* owner argued that journalism practice was full of complex challenges. He explained that it was not a question of right or wrong, or black or white but hinged on the ethical issues. He noted that ethical issues were not like laws that were easy to define and easy to know when broken (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012). He stressed that the ethical considerations in journalism were complex and debatable. He felt that the bad journalism condemned today was capable of producing good journalism at another moment in time (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Nelson Mandela was called a terrorist by the Western media at one time and was later praised by the same media. The Western media carried out the worst form of journalism on the African region but the same media needed to be defended when attacked. It needed to be defended despite getting some stories wrong (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012).

He felt that the right to journalism needed to be defended as it was more supreme than one story or two stories or a thousand stories. He noted that there was need to defend the right to gather information and disseminate it consistently and continually. He stressed that there was need to defend all journalists but this did not mean defending wrong and right acts but defending their right to do their job (Chama, 2012). He further argued that there was no profession where people never got things wrong (Kasoma, 1997a). He pointed out that

patients die in hospitals killed sometimes by negligence of doctors and nurses and most of them never even go to prison. He argued that but when journalists got a story wrong they often went to prison (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012).

He stressed that there was need to defend the general practice of journalism regardless of stories. He also noted that one wrong story did not qualify one to be condemned for life. He felt that a bad newspaper today could be a good newspaper tomorrow that could serve society and humanity. He emphasised that there was need to defend journalism simply because it was journalism and for the sake of journalism. He cited that even the journalism one might detest needed to be defended when attacked (Chama, 2012; Kalala & Mupushi, 2012; Chirwa, 1996). He further suggested that it was vital to critically look at journalism work in the spirit of criticism and self-criticism (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012). He also pointed out that it was very important because the practice was based on ethical and professional considerations (Kasoma, 1996). He felt that every journalist was potentially capable of making mistakes and credibility could be lost over one bad story (Kalala & Mupushi, 2012). He also suggested that journalism as a profession required self-reflexivity on the part of editors, owners and journalists (Makungu, 2004).

Therefore, to conclude this section, my respondents provided many insights on the aspirations for the future of the tabloids within an emerging democracy. I started by looking at aspiration for total press freedom, and then from political partnerships and for media law reforms. Other aspirations were for the media laws that promoted sustainability of tabloids and from editorial interferences and ownership controls. Other further aspirations were to protect journalist from political violence, and for socially responsible journalism of nation building, and for the promotion of online journalism. Finally, journalism practice of self-criticism and self-reflexivity was also stressed. My next section looks at ways the press could make progress in professionalism.

## **6.5. Ways the tabloids can make progress in their professionalism**

In emerging democracies, it is always difficult to articulate ways tabloid journalism practice can make progress in professional practice (Ongowo, 2011; Wasserman, 2008; Kasoma, 1996). Very often this is partly because of the culture of intolerance by political authorities and ill-trained journalists (Mano, 2005; Makungu, 2004). Other issues that impact on the way the tabloids can make progress are on the ownership interferences on the professional practice of journalism and often make it difficult for journalists to articulate their responsibilities effectively (Chama, 2012; Phiri, 1999).

In this section, I start by looking at responses on the need to avoid political games by tabloid journalists and tabloid owners, and I then look at putting social problems at the centre of tabloid news in order to make progress. Other responses are on the need to strike the balance between market interests and public interests, and on the provision of a platform for the ordinary citizens than merely promoting the interests of the ruling elites. Other issues in this section are on avoidance of personalising news and the need to break the cultural barriers. Other insights are on the need for tabloid journalism to embrace political communication fairly, and on the monitoring of the government regulatory. Furthermore, the need for online journalism as a promising platform is also highlighted and for the Press Association of Zambia and for the Media Institute of Southern Africa to be more critical of media organisations and the government behaviour.

### ***(a) Avoidance of political games by journalists and owners of media institutions***

Tabloid journalists and the media institutions owners very often tend to be entangled into political affairs within the emerging democracies which at times are too difficult to escape (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that tabloid journalists and the media institutions owners needed to desist from playing political games in order to make progress professionally. Similarly, Cynthia Kasoma (interviewee) too, argued that newspapers needed to focus on serving the general public in order to be able to contribute

positively to the maturity of democracy. She added that journalists too needed to hold authorities accountable on matters that affected the ordinary citizens. She further pointed out that *The Post* particularly needed to avoid taking confusing political sides to command credibility from the citizens (Phiri, 1999). She argued that during parliamentary and presidential elections for example (2006-2007), the tabloid often castigated the major opposition political party leader Michael Sata as an idiot while (2011-2012) later backed him as an angelic saviour (Amsterdam, 2012).

For example, she argued, on September 14, 2006, *The Post* discredited Michael Sata while an opposition political leader in its editorial 'Sata is not our messiah'. She noted that the editorial argued that it could not understand why Sata claimed to be the saviour of the country while defended individuals that were facing charges of plundering public resources (Amsterdam, 2012). She added that but again in 2001, the same tabloid called Sata a violent individual in reference to allegedly connection to political violence while working as a National Secretary for the Movement for Multiparty Democracy. She stressed that the editorial explained that Sata was corrupt having managed a corruptly-funded campaign in support of President Frederick Chiluba's (2000-2001) un-Constitutional third-term (Amsterdam, 2012).

In this regard, Innes Nsokolo (interviewee) felt that *The Post* was no longer serving the needs of the ordinary citizens effectively by demonstrating confusing political positions. She pointed out that its political games were not good for democracy. She also felt that the ordinary citizens were deprived of credible information. She further added that the tabloid needed to keep a critical eye on the government operations (Phiri, 2008). She argued that by joining government support, the tabloid was not making progress in its professional practice. Similar scholarly insights by Kasoma (1996) show that newspapers and their financiers can only make progress by allowing editors to provide fair information that foster the maturity of democracy. But this is not often possible especially in emerging democracies as editors usually survive at their mercy (Mano, 2005; Phiri, 1999).



***(b) Social problems should be at the centre of journalism practice***

The media plays a vital role in exposing social problems of the ordinary citizens within the broader context of the emerging democracies (Makungu, 2004). For example, John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that *The Post* needed to be embedded in complex social problems to make progress (Phiri, 1999). He explained that it needed to provide stories of human suffering for the government to react and be able to develop the country for the better (Ogbondah, 1994). Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) narrated that even though the daily tabloid chose to support the government and to ignore the issues of dissatisfaction among the citizens, somehow somewhere, the issues of poverty were always knocking. She argued that this was an area the tabloid needed to be honest to make progress in terms of truthful reporting (Phiri, 1999).

Moreover, even though *The Post* (2011-2012) at times ignored social problems because of political advocacy and interests, Anderson (1991) explains that citizens are always aware of their social problems and are dependent on each other. Similarly, Amsterdam (2012) argues that even when the issues of poverty complaints disappeared from the pages of the tabloid, the readers never for a moment thought that poverty disappeared in their communities. In fact, poverty was there and was real only that it was not being reported by the tabloid (Kasoma, 1996).

***(c) Striking the balance between market interests and public interests***

The media businesses are very profitable for the owners in emerging democracies (Banda, 2007; Phiri, 1999). Globally too, if properly financed by advertisers and professionally run, the media businesses generate good income for the owners (Kung, 2008; Mungonge, 2007). Generally, there are good and bad media institutions all over the world (Manne, 2011). Moreover, even the criticisms about the media usually reflect concerns not just about the media but about business generally (Kung, 2008). Critically, even though the general public

expect the media to serve the public interests, their owners too also want them to make profits and remain sustainable (Phiri, 1999).

The critical issue is on striking the balance between market interests and public interests and tend to divide scholarly debate (Banda, 2004; Kasoma, 1996; Phiri, 1999). In fact, when the tabloids places excessive value on markets as a priority in social life, the ordinary citizens and their struggles becomes less valued in social practice (Kasoma, 1996). Moreover, other scholars also see a danger in focusing so much on market interests as a guiding norm in social life (Couldry, 2010:16). For example, Ernest Mulenga (interviewee) explained that *The Post* by focusing so much on markets at the expense of the public interests meant that the ordinary citizens could not get answers in order to understand their social problems and could not overcome poverty. He added that but again, the tabloid needed markets to survive financially (Mungonge, 2007).

In this regard, Couldry (2010:16) argues that it is unfortunate that the market interests are often a reference point for entire social positioning of individuals, and even values such as 'freedom' are often bound with 'social costs'. However, in emerging democracies, markets are vital for any newspaper to survive and to continue publishing, there is need for the continuous flow of money to function properly (Mungonge, 2007). Above all, generally, the newspaper business is very complex because it touches on market interests and on public interests (Banda, 2007).

***(e) Providing a platform for the ordinary citizens and not only for the ruling elites***

Tabloids in emerging democracies are at times criticised for failure to provide a platform for the ordinary citizens (Kasoma, 1996). Other scholars too, tend to criticise tabloids for always presenting ideas of the ruling elites (Phiri, 1999). In fact, giving a platform to the ordinary citizens involve discrimination against ways that awalys undermine their struggles (Couldry, 2010:2). Besides, it is simply not just enough that there are more platforms if ordinary citizens are not accommodated (Kasoma, 1996). For example, Antoinnete Kasanka

(interviewee) felt that *The Post* to make progress needed to provide a platform for the poor citizens regularly and not only promoting the interests of the ruling elites. She argued that this was an area journalism practice was to make progress within an emerging democracy.

In fact, the provision of the world from the perspective of the ordinary citizens is the main reason why the role of the media in society is so fascinating (Fenton, 2007). For example, Kasoma (1996) explains that the centrality of the media content should be on the way ordinary citizens interpret and evaluate their communities. It is within this context that John Kaputo (interviewee) felt that *The Post* needed to provide a platform for the ordinary citizens regularly to expose their lives and their daily struggles as Natalie Fenton explains that the media can contribute to the creation of the new levels of social stratification which can endanger the lower classes (Fenton, 2007). For example, *The Post* (2011-2012) only promoted the views of the ruling class and only covered the citizens that supported the government while the critical individuals were sidelined and discredited (Amsterdam, 2012).

Similarly, Freedman (2008) explains that the media should provide information rooted in 'everyday life' of the ordinary citizens. In addition, the media ought to capture the ordinary citizens' views and even the formulation of the media laws and policies should put them at the centre. Moreover, Audrey Muma (interviewee) too, noted that journalists needed to provide a platform for the ordinary citizens and needed to expose issues that affected their daily lives (Wasserman, 2008). Furthermore, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) argued that *The Post* needed to capture the poor and the vulnerable within the competing interests. For example, as already signalled, in Freedman's (2008) politics of everyday life, the official policymakers too, need to consider the ordinary citizens as vital in the shaping of the media policies. Moreover, it is within this context that the media ought to be oriented towards resourcing the ordinary citizens and other vulnerable groups within society (Kasoma, 1996).

**(f) Avoidance of personalising issues and breaking the cultural barriers**

Journalists and their newspaper owners tend to personalise issues and to unleash personal insults on perceived enemies in emerging democracies (Phiri, 1999). Generally, some scholars argue that the newspapers, particularly the independent tabloids often spares no one in their journalistic exploits; libelling, invading privacy and generally carrying out a type of reportage that can best be described as 'vendetta journalism' (Kasoma, 1996:7). Within this context, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) felt that there was need for fair reporting of issues for *The Post* to make progress as a respectable platform. Similarly, Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) narrated that the journalists needed to improve the level of reporting standards. He pointed out that there was need for the tabloid to avoid personalising issues. He added that its owner too, even though often pursued personal agendas through editorial comments, needed to avoid attacking personal enemies which was a professional challenge (Amsterdam, 2012).

Some scholars such as Kasoma (1996) and Phiri (1999) argue that the tabloids in emerging democracies can be vital partners to the maturity of democracy even though the majority of them are foreign bodies in their societies. For example, the authors cite the tabloids tendency to use abusive language against perceived enemies in the news they report. Generally, abusive language is used when a journalist or a newspaper owner, is so angry with someone that instead of choosing to reason with the victim vents anger by insulting, instead of convincing citizens through well-presented facts and reasoned-arguments (Phiri, 1999). Furthermore, Kasoma (1996) explains that tabloids need to be rooted in local values, traditions and cultural fabric of life; - 'Africanness.' In addition, 'vindictive and vendetta journalism' by tabloids is common in attacking enemies through the use of degrading language (Kasoma, 1996).

But the *The Post* in justifying its approach to using abusive language on perceived opponents often argued that it never insulted any citizen but that, it was merely critical (Chama, 2012). For example, in its editorial of January 24, 2010, it refuted the accusation by

some scholars (Makungu, 2004; Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1996) of finding pleasure in insulting critics arguing that when it called any President a liar after lying was not an insult. It noted that such moral guidelines were misleadingly assaulting press freedom (The Post, 2010b).

Furthermore, *The Post* (January 24, 2010) editorial argued that some citizens were so preoccupied with moral arguments than poverty issues. It criticized individuals who equated national leaders to one's parent arguing that lying and stealing were morally wrong regardless of one's position. It felt that the analogy of equating a national leader to one's parent was misleading (The Post, 2010b). For example, within this context, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) noted that the tabloid to make progress professionally, it needed to constructively criticise government and offer moral guidelines that were beneficial for the maturity of democracy (Kasoma, 1996).

Critically, *The Post's* drive through the editorial (January 24, 2010) edition was to change citizens' mentality towards leadership (Chama, 2012). For instance, it argued that leadership was about service within the broader context of democracy. It further clarified that democracy was not about lying and stealing from the poor. But it felt that leaders needed to be confronted and challenged and needed to be exposed, and this did not mean insulting one's father (Phiri, 2008). It even refuted the idea of equating the Presidency to fatherhood in a family and citizens to children (The Post, 2010b). It argued that the analogy was a dangerous form of paternalism that was in conflict with democracy in a modern political system (Chama, 2012).

Generally, tabloid journalism genre often carries personality characteristics that move tabloid narratives forward (Bird, 1990). Besides, the rhetoric style of writing often labelled as 'private language' position its readers as individuals to be guided by common sense (Zoonen, 2000). Moreover, tabloid journalists excel in rhetoric form of language and the personalised characteristics make readers to easily make sense of the stories (Gripsrud, 2008). For example, tabloid journalists at times position women as either whores or virgins while men

as heroes or criminals while at the same time feature women as victims while men as perpetrators (Zoonen, 2000).

On another note, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) felt that *The Post* needed to acknowledge and consider the fact that the cultural values were deeply embedded in human affairs. He explained that the tabloid needed to help the citizens to change their mentality on many cultural issues that undermined democracy. But again, he critiqued that in as much as the tabloid tendency to show pictures of 'soft pornography' was motivated by mainly need to improve sales (Amsterdam, 2012), there was also need to be aware of the cultural resistance of pictures from some sections of the society (Kasoma, 1996). Besides, scholarly debates shows that even though radical interpretations of tabloid journalism formats that overcome cultural and moral resistance can be found in the work of Fiske (1989), that tend to receive both criticism and support. Moreover, the debate on progressive or conservative ways of tabloid journalism is far from straight forward (Bird, 1990). In fact, I should note here that politics and culture tend to be transformed by the media easily which allows citizens to gain interests in many human affairs (Ocitti, 1999).

***(g) Tabloid journalism should embrace political communication fairly***

Tabloid journalism practice plays a very critical role in political communication within emerging democracies (Phiri, 1999). For instance, Street (2005:23) explains that even though political communication is vital for democracy, its message is often according to the interests of the media organisations. The author further argues that it can either build or damage democracy as it tend to often privilege presentation over substance and appearance over policy. Furthermore, the author notes that even spin doctors and advertising executives very often tend to be recruited by the governments and political parties to serve the authorities and not to empower the citizens (Street, 2005).

Therefore, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) within this context felt that *The Post* needed to provide quality and fair information for the ordinary citizens for them to make informed

decisions. She explained that the tabloid needed to encourage political participation especially by the critical citizens. Similarly, John Kaputo (interviewee) too, saw the need for the tabloid to broaden its coverage of issues within democracy and to engage the government in decision-making processes than what was transpiring in the media-political arena (Amsterdam, 2012). In fact, tabloid journalism can play a major role in political communication by engaging the ordinary citizens in emerging democracies (Wasserman, 2008). Moreover, political leaders too, often turn increasingly to tabloid journalism to help them craft and communicate their messages effectively (Manne, 2011). In short, tabloid journalism practice encompasses issues of gender, race, belief, and governance of these relationships (Inthorn, 2011). It has the potential to broaden the reach of politics on events and can mobilise citizens to gain interest in political affairs (Sparks, 2000).

Generally, *The Post* (2011-2012) often concentrated on the ruling authorities than the ordinary citizens in its political communication which was not good for an emerging democracy (Kasoma, 1997b). Besides, it promoted its own interest groups and attacked critical individuals (Amsterdam, 2012). For example, in 2010, it attacked Frederick Chiluba relentlessly arguing that the former national leader was a scoundrel (The Post, 2010a). It even questioned Chiluba's patriotism arguing that it was the last refuge of scoundrels. It also felt that the leaders that abuse citizens by stealing their few belongings needed to be ashamed for claiming patriotism as a defence mechanism (Donge, 2008).

It furthermore, explained that the former national leader needed to be ashamed to preach morality to citizens whose dignity he abused while in office and that there was no need to fool the poor citizens into believing the nonsense (Amsterdam, 2012). It also argued that the former leader wanted to pretend to be an avid and principled anti-imperialist and yet, there was nothing about his actions when he was president, and even after he left, which qualified him to make such a claim (The Post, 2010a).

Besides, Joseph Sakala (interviewee) felt that for *The Post* to make progress, it needed to name and shame while bearing in mind the positive and negative impact of its message on

the ordinary citizens. He argued that it needed to consider the impact of its message on national stability within the competing political parties (Kasoma, 1996). In fact, and critically, in emerging democracies, tabloids can trigger civil war in politically unstable countries (Kasoma, 1996; Lungu, 1986). This is because of tabloids tendency to appeal to emotions and senses that easily influences readers to take drastic actions (Wasserman, 2008).

#### ***(h) Adherence to monitoring government***

In every successful democracy, the role of the vibrant and independent newspapers is crucially important in providing checks and balances, ensuring accountability of elected officials, and in delivering a service to the public as the Fourth Estate (Ogbondah, 1994). Generally, society extends an enormous level of trust toward the owners, editors, and journalists working in the field of journalism, granting them the presumption of professionalism that the information they provide is factual (Kasoma, 1996). But unfortunately when journalists fail to deliver good professional responsibilities, they betray public trust (Amsterdam, 2012). Crucially tabloid journalism is very instrumental within emerging democracies in monitoring government (Phiri, 2008). For examples, *The Post* (1991-2011) was critical in monitoring government accountability. In fact, it was the first to call President Frederick Chiluba (1991-2001) a thief who needed to be seriously investigated while he was still in office (Donge, 2008). Furthermore, it often challenged President Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008) to account for incidents of financial mismanagement in his government (Phiri, 2008). In addition, it exposed corruption in President Rupiah Banda's (2008-2011) government and rampant neopotism (Chama, 2012).

Therefore, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) argued that there was need for *The Post* to continue monitoring government. She felt that by ceasing to monitor activities in President Michael Sata's (2011-2012) government, it was not good for democracy and it was an area it needed to improve upon (Amsterdam, 2012). Scholarly discussions too, show that the media play a critical role in monitoring good government (Ogbondah, 1994). But this is only possible if the citizens are reliably informed (Phiri, 1999). Moreover, the information from the



media can either help citizens to make right or wrong decisions (Ocitti, 1999). For example, even though the citizens vote for all kinds of reasons and it is their democratic right, information from the media affect their judgements (Wasserman, 2008). Therefore, journalists are obliged to monitor the government carefully and to provide the information that can allow citizens to make informed decisions on competing political candidates (Wahl Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

For example, according to Kasoma (1997a), the media are obliged to monitor the government carefully and need to strive for neutrality even if they might hold contrary views. Besides, even if partisan political journalism is permitted, where it exists, it should not pretend to be fair monitoring (Phiri, 1999). But unfortunately, *The Post* (2011-2012) ceased to provide checks and balances on the government because of political interests (Amsterdam, 2012). In this regard, John Kaputo (interviewee) claimed that it compromised its responsibility of providing a critical eye on the government operations. He felt that it was an area the tabloid needed to change to make progress and remain relevant to the ordinary citizens. He further explained that it needed to provide accurate and thoughtful information and analysis about the government operations. He added that it needed to enlighten citizens to participate meaningfully in monitoring the government affairs (Makungu, 2004). Furthermore, Isaac Mubita (interviewee) argued that it needed to show professionalism in the way it monitored operations in the government. He noted that the political partnership made the tabloid more obliged to sing praises even where credit was not due instead of exposing failings. Similarly, Audrey Muma (interviewee) noted that the tabloid needed to encourage the citizens to keep a critical eye on the government operations. She explained that it needed to improve on the quality of reporting activities in the government operations (Phiri, 2008).

In emerging democracies, provision of checks and balances on the government is very important (Makungu, 2004). In fact, monitoring of the government accountability is often encouraged by the citizens and expected from the media (Kasoma, 1996). Generally, journalists become crucial in scrutinizing the powerful in the government and in the

corporate field (Ogbondah, 1994). Journalists monitor and prevent abuses characterised by the government authorities (Kimer, 2012). They also question the government decisions and competence, efficiency and honest, and whether it is fulfilling its responsibilities to the citizens (Wahl Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009:239).

As already signalled, Audrey Muma (interviewee) added that *The Post* needed to monitor the government operations closely to remain relevant to the ordinary citizens (Phiri, 2008). She pointed out that it needed to analyse the government policies carefully and whether they were based on sound judgement and designed in the best interests of the poor. She further argued that it needed to oversee the activities of the government authorities on behalf of the citizens. She further felt that it needed to mediate between the citizens and the authorities to ensure transparency (Ogbondah, 1994).

In fact, keeping a critical eye by the media on government operation is very instrumental and often leads to efficiency in the provision of services (Phiri, 2008). It is perhaps one of the reasons why the media especially in emerging democracies is often associated with the role of making sure that the government is fulfilling its duties (Kasoma, 1996). Similarly, Ogbondah (1994) see the media as major auditors of the government structures to make sure that they are serving the citizens effectively within an emerging democracy.

#### ***(i) Online journalism as a vital platform***

Online journalism often faces serious resistance from the government authorities in an emerging democracy (Adam, 2012; Banda, 2010). Within this context, Inness Nsokolo (interviewee) suggested that there was need to consider online journalism by newspapers. She felt that the newspapers that struggled in print format needed to go online since the print formats were heavily suppressed by the government. She pointed out that the government was struggling to control online sources and it was an area the press could make progress (Banda, 2010).

Even though online journalism was slowly emerging, it was undermined by the high levels of poverty (Banda, 2010). Besides, many citizens still considered the Internet as a luxury and partly because of the high poverty levels. Moreover, the developments in the information communication technologies in emerging democracies were also very slow (Fliess & Sandeen, 2000). Furthermore, as already noted, the government was always threatening online newspapers relentlessly (Mwenya, 2012). It was also looking at different ways to clamp down on uncontrollable diffusion of information (Adam, 2012).

For example, in 2012, online *Zambian Watchdog* was closed-down by the government and access in the country was blocked (Mwenya, 2012a). Other online newspapers too that were often critical of government were also blocked access (Mwenya, 2012). It was within this context that the Media Institute of Southern Africa criticised the government for its selective attacks on the online newspapers (Adam, 2012). But interestingly, the online newspapers still continued to be accessed using proxies and other social network platforms (Banda, 2010).

***(j) PAZ and MISA needed to be more critical of journalists and government operations***

The Press Association of Zambia (PAZ) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) were media bodies that monitored the various media operations in the country while at the same time operated as pressure groups on the government (Mungonge, 2007; Makungu, 2004). For example, the Press Association of Zambia was based in Zambia and only represented the local media institutions and journalists (Makungu, 2004) while the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) covered the entire Southern Africa and its headquarter was located in Windhoek, Namibia (Banda, 2006).

In this regard, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) noted that the Press Association of Zambia and the Media Institute of Southern Africa needed to be more critical of the government behaviour especially towards the online newspapers. She narrated that they needed to intensify their critical role of providing checks on the government and on the journalists to

uphold their ethical standards. But John Kaputo (interviewee) accused these two media bodies of poor management and leadership arguing that they resulted in poor performance. He pointed out that there was also massive in-house fighting between the two media organizations. He also felt that these two media bodies were irrelevant and not taken seriously by the government and by the big media institutions (Banda, 2006).

Similarly, Antoinette Kasanka (interviewee) cited an incident at the self-regulation conference in 2010 at which the Press Association of Zambia Vice President Amos Chanda was labelled a liar by the Media Institute of Southern Africa's national Director Sipo Kapumba. In addition, Audrey Muma (interviewee) explained that there were accusations that these two media organizations were infiltrated by the individuals with political interests. Besides, she pointed out that the leaders of these two organisations were keen to remove journalists that were critical of the government. She substantiated her claims by pointing out that the Press Association of Zambia Vice President Amos Chanda was later appointed by President Michael Sata as Second Secretary for Press at the Zambia High Commission in Britain.

Overall, my respondents in this section in discussing ways the tabloids could make progress in professionalism highlighted the need to avoid political games by journalists. Others also felt that journalism practice needed to put social problems at the centre and to strike the balance between market interests and public interests. Furthermore, other respondents felt that there was need to provide a platform for ordinary citizens and to resist from personalising matters. In addition, other respondents felt the need to embrace political communication fairly and to monitor the government carefully including the need to consider the online journalism seriously. Finally, the Press Association of Zambia and the Media Institute of Southern Africa were also challenged to be more critical and more serious in monitoring the media and the government operations (Mungonge, 2007).

## 6.6. Conclusion

Within the emerging democracy, there are many factors that often hinder journalists' roles in their professional practice (Chama, 2012; Banda, 2004; Phiri, 1999; Kasoma, 1996). In fact, in this Chapter, tabloid journalists gave different perspectives based on their experiences. It is important to note that they were aware of their responsibilities and professional challenges. Therefore, the main issues in this Chapter on *The Post* and its professional dynamics focused on moments when being a tabloid journalist was felt to be a valuable profession.

Within this area, the issues that emerged looked at the development value of tabloid journalism practice. It further looked at the provision of the platform for democratic participation of the citizens and the need to side with the poor as a professional value. It also looked at alerting the citizens and at bridging the gap between the poor citizens and the government especially exposing accountability and corruption despite the ethical challenges. Another issue focused on editorial freedom and at the level of interference by *The Post* owner. It also explored the owner's tendency to fire journalists and its impact on fear to make editorial decisions. In fact, the editorial and the ownership conflict was also discussed including the editing pressures, the political partnerships, and the market interests which were all seen to have undermined editorial freedom.

Other issues were on news that was considered best practice in tabloid journalism by journalists themselves, and focused on investigative journalism while looking at stories that exposed illegal activities using sensational language, stories that provided an index of dissatisfaction in society, and investigatory stories that promoted the culture of transparency. In addition, other stories that were stressed centred on the poor and the need to be attractive to readers and to customers and on the need for objectivity.

Furthermore, other issues were on the aspirations for the future of the tabloids and looked at total press freedom especially from partnership. Others issues looked at the need for the

media law reforms that promoted tabloids and from editorial interference and ownership controls. In addition, other aspirations were on the need for journalists' protection from political violence and for socially responsible journalism within the context of nation building and democracy. Other issues aspired for, were on the promotion of the online journalism and for the journalism practice of self-criticism and self-reflexivity.

On the issue of the ways the tabloids could make progress in professionalism, my respondents cited the avoidance of political games and that the social problems needed to occupy the centre stage in journalism practice. Another issue was on striking the balance between market interests and public interests, and on the provision of a platform for the ordinary citizens instead of only promoting the ruling elites. In addition, the avoidance of personalising issues was also stressed, the need to break the cultural barriers and embrace political communication fairly, the need to monitor the government effectively, and the need to promote of the online journalism. Moreover, the Press Association of Zambia and the Media Institute of Southern Africa were also challenged to be more serious and more critical in their daily operations. Finally, the next and last Chapter provides my research analysis and conclusion.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion and recommendations

This Chapter offers a compelling case for the thesis's central argument and provides substantive set of concrete conclusions that clarifies issues that impact on press freedom within the context of an emerging democracy. It discusses issues and debates that emerged from the previous Chapters and during my entire research investigation and looks at the interactions of professional practices, ownership interests, and the emerging trends in the media industry both at national and international level. It also outlines the conclusion and offers recommendations for future research.

#### 7.0. Introduction

My research now reflects on key findings and points out various aspects of the limitations that impact on press freedom and tabloid journalism practice within an emerging democracy through *The Post*, a daily tabloid. It also reflects upon the original research questions and makes a relationship between press freedom, professional practices, and ownership interests, which impact on the maturity of democracy and further offers ideas and avenues for future research.

This research adds more detailed knowledge on the professional practice of tabloid journalism as an example of the potential role of tabloid media in developing democracy while stressing areas of challenge. Besides, given the original research questions and aims the research establishes how tabloid journalism operate within an emerging democracy, and as it transpired, how journalists and owners of media institutions often get entangled into political affairs often difficult to escape, and how these entanglements impact on the general content of the information disseminated to the citizens.

## **7.1. Research analysis and overview**

Generally, the relationship between journalists, owners, and politicians that exist in emerging democracies is essentially one of conflict, but can also be viewed as that of trading or exchange in which under-resourced journalists, often working in under-staffed newsrooms, increasingly rely on owners for financial survival, while offers access to editorial control. Within these contexts, this research has found that this trading or exchange relationship particularly applies to tabloid journalism, often practiced in emerging democracies, and thus, highlights the strong position of the owners of media institutions.

It is important also to point out that the tabloids in emerging democracies and more particularly in Zambia struggle to survive financially and politically. It is also difficult to find examples of newspapers surviving through only sales and advertising. In addition, sales and advertising only cannot sustain tabloids in emerging democracies due to high poverty levels, poor circulation figures, limited numbers of advertisers and the poor reading culture.

It is further established that tabloid journalism plays an important role within an emerging democracy despite its own inherent problems. In fact, tabloids in emerging democracies tend to be very few in circulation and often employ few journalists and support staff to keep costs low, but usually generate considerable amount of information, and seems to be considered an area which attracts readers.

The nature of content in tabloids within emerging democracies also points towards the characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to tabloid journalism. But crucial journalistic tasks such as investigation, research and cross-checking information, have been replaced by relying on political sources and supporters of the newspapers interests. In fact, tabloid journalists' roles have been reduced to exercising a limited choice over which sources to use, and sometimes in consultation with the newspaper owners. For example, unbalanced information in particular tend to appear often and tend to be a successful route to coverage, something that would be highly questionable within any other part of journalism.



Therefore, this research has shown that tabloid journalism practice within an emerging democracy has a clear manipulative function, uses an array of methods that includes the supply of ready-made stories and photographic materials, and giving of exclusives to drive the message across; as well as utilising the power of expert knowledge. As former editor Audrey Muma (interviewee) pointed out: “Everyone at *The Post* feared to take editorial decisions when friends of the tabloid owner were in news for wrong doing.” Generally, editorial decisions not to cover the owner’s friends when they were in news for illegal activities were nothing less than to impress the owner of the newspaper. This statement was repeatedly confirmed throughout the course of my research and appeared to be common knowledge among tabloid journalists at the newspaper.

It has also emerged that tabloid journalism practice can be a very dangerous platform that can damage the maturity of an emerging democracy. Its main power is not so much the threat of sensational negative coverage of opponents, but the denial of coverage. Arguably the critical issue in tabloid journalism practice among editors and journalists is in choosing between the public interests and the owner’s interests. In this regard it is worth noting that some tabloid journalists tend to place more weight on the news interests of the tabloid owner than the public interests. As former journalist Isaac Mubita (interviewee) confirmed that only stories of interest to *The Post* owner largely recieved heavy funding to be seriously pursued, investigated, and brought to logical conclusion.

Furthermore, the content analysis of the investigatory stories which were part of my study demonstrated the tabloid newspaper’s higher corruption exposures. However, it is important to note that even though it claimed to be independent of the news desk, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the findings show that the editorial freedom was not protected from the owner’s influence. In fact, tabloid journalism practice was fundamentally dictated by the owner’s interests and then, the advertising interests and these two were therefore of considerable importance to the tabloid’s operations and its political positioning.

Therefore, ownership interests which were often political in character usually combined with advertising, and were a powerful force which guaranteed coverage within the emerging democracy. This confirms McManus's (1994) observations on the immense power of advertisers and of owners which they hold over the newspapers. Besides, the emergence of tabloids supplements has opened up a considerable outlet for advertising coverage and therefore advertising space. For example, the appearance of *Sangwapo* supplement in *The Post* was a step taken by the owner to gain more advertising leverage. In fact, advertising and ownership interests to a large extent, have become major components within tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies. This explains the significant lack of objectivity in reporting which has led to the notion that critical and investigative journalism is virtually non-existent but rather serves as a tool for the owners to pursue their own interests.

Nonetheless, this research has found a dedicated amount of pages given to investigative reports and corruption coverage regularly, thus confirming the value of tabloids in emerging democracies despite their inherent problems. Furthermore, these findings indicate the substantial economic and political value of tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies. As former journalist Ignatius Ngulube (interviewee) felt that the tabloid needed to be credited for exposing corruption through its own investigations for over two decades.

Furthermore, this research has also revealed the power of tabloids on politicians within the emerging democracies. It has found that tabloid journalism plays a firm part in promoting politicians and in bringing them down through political communication. In fact, it became prominent throughout the course of my research that politicians' activities added to the newsworthiness. For instance, when politicians made front page news, it was almost certain that it was often for illegal activities. Consequently, a considerable amount of activities by politicians were geared towards personal political promotion. But being in good terms with the tabloid owner largely guaranteed good coverage. It also meant that coverage of politicians was motivated by owner's interests and agenda within the political affairs.

Moreover, sensational front page headlines by the tabloids play a crucial part in emerging democracies. It is arguably far more important than the ordinary daily soft news. It is also largely due to the fact that items on the front pages of the newspaper are intended to attract customers and readers. But, it is also due to high illiteracy levels that make tabloids combinations of sensational pictures accompanied by sensational headlines to be more appealing to average readers. Part of my research thesis has shown that sensational headlines on corruption within tabloid journalism are crucially important in emerging democracies.

Generally, investigative reports presented through sensational headlines and pictures attracted further investigations by the government authorities than ordinary stories with more subtle headlines. Therefore, my research has clearly shown where the power and the dependencies lie in investigative reports by tabloids in emerging democracies. My findings show that tabloid journalists on the whole did not often research their own stories but turned to sources within government for information and also got directives from the owner of the publication. This also to a great extent explains the discrepancies and the critical nature of investigative reporting within tabloid journalism practice in emerging democracies which should be treated with critical views.

Overall my research was conducive in establishing factors that hinder the practice of tabloid journalism and press freedom within Zambia's emerging democracy. It confirmed the original theory that tabloid journalism even though is often demonised in many Western scholarly debates, plays a critical role in the maturity of emerging democracies despite inherent problems of ownership interests, advertising challenges, and political positioning conflicts.

## **7.2. Conclusion**

The denigration of tabloid journalism by many critics has been partly challenged by my research. I have indicated that tabloid journalism can be a powerful tool in its role as an investigatory and campaigning organ, fighting injustice and, at its best, campaigning for

those readers and citizens without a strong political platform (Wasserman, 2008). This perhaps is the ideal of tabloid journalism that I measured, and continue to measure tabloid, and indeed all journalism by. *The Post* also demonstrated powerful experience and force in its role as an investigatory newspaper. It functioned most effectively as a tool for democracy when working for the people and in tangent to government. In this sense, the model of the public sphere with journalism as a key agent remains, in my view central (Kasoma, 1996).

Significantly, one must also understand journalism in the immediacy of political, institutional and national context. My research happened at a period of transition. This transition was unforeseen but actually became a lens through which to question and also unpack the ideals and flaws of tabloid journalism and *The Post*, and also to a modest degree more generally. The results of this transition both troubled my original assumptions about *The Post* as an agent for those without a political platform in Zambia; heightened my respondents' view of the role of journalism as they accommodated these changes and also raised new issues about the on-going state of tabloid journalism in the context of broader debates about the role and future of the press.

*The Post* operates in an emerging democracy and demonstrates that the media and journalism in particular has a key role in the development of democratic perspectives and in overseeing the smooth and equitable running of democracy. The fault lines occur when the newspaper, its owner, editor or its journalists become too enmeshed in the structures and networks of governing elites. My research suggest, coming as it did opportunely at a point of tremendous transition for the newspaper from government opponent to advocate, that the most ethical and professionally rewarding position for journalism is at one step removed from the ruling structures of political power.

My research would not have had its levels of insight or its ambivalences without the hours of time accorded by journalists and professionals working in the field in Zambia. As a former journalist too, it was crucial, I considered, for me to accord the professional media worker a platform on the ideals and the problems of working in an emerging democracy. These

questions and problems, it seems have both immediate but also more general pertinence in the sense that journalists in Western Europe and in the United States, as indicated in my broader reading and research, oftentimes also raise ideals and concerns about the protection of, and the role of, the journalist working within a professionalised set of organisational relationships. These relationships were expressed with nuance and with honesty and professional passion by my respondents. Despite retractions of offers for conversation from some journalists, which in itself demonstrated that all research of journalism has to inevitably respond to the changing political and professional moment, the research was given weight by the insights of these professionals I interviewed and underlines the importance of enabling a space for their observations in media research.

### **7.3. Recommendations**

After offering a compelling case for the thesis's central argument and providing substantive set of concrete conclusions, I make the general recommendations on the back of this research which indicate both my findings but also areas where I would endeavour to extend my research beyond the life of the thesis:

#### ***(a) Striving for excellence and transparency***

Tabloid journalists should strive for excellence and professionalism in order to enhance press freedom through social responsibility that is conducive for the maturity of democracy. Once tabloid journalists acquire excellence through regular training, they will be able to understand the implications of their work on the broader perspective and will make well informed decisions regarding their professional practices.

Ownership of all newspapers and particularly tabloids and including shareholders should be made public especially that the tabloids were always playing a watchdog role over the government and other public institutions, citizens too needed to watch over them as institutions. Furthermore, the Press Association of Zambia and the Media Institute of

Southern Africa needed to be more critical and professional in challenging the government operations towards the tabloid journalists and needed to intensify their critical role of checks and balance on the government and on the journalists to uphold high professional standards. In addition, the government needed to recognize that online journalism was important and beneficial to the promotion and protection of democracy and there was need to develop laws that fostered variety of platforms especially through the Internet.

***(b) Avenues for future research***

The process of undertaking this research has exposed several issues which deserve further attention for the purpose of academic debate and which are important in view of establishing the nature of tabloid journalism practice within emerging democracies and the factors that limit the professional practice and press freedom. In fact, my research looked at press freedom in Zambia's politics through *The Post*. Future research is needed to consider the practical value of these findings in terms of ownership and its impact on democratic participation. The relevance of such research would seek to understand owners' interactions with politicians which have positive and negative impacts on democracy.

Another area of future research would involve much more extensive information and analysis of a wide range of tabloid journalists and a wider range of tabloid newspapers in order to investigate their impact on press freedom and on the professional practice in democracy. This research would benefit from two levels of contextual analysis. Firstly, closer analysis of the media environment within Zambia itself against the backdrop of academic and professional debates about the role of journalism within developmental models of democracy, secondly, a consideration of tabloid journalism across national boundaries and indeed given the role of the Internet within digital arenas. Here, the role of the professional in reflection upon their duties and desires as a journalist would continue to be crucial alongside a consideration of the shared critical concerns of journalist academics internationally. Such research would need respondent controls for gender, types of media experience, and the careful mapping of each media institution.

## **Appendix: A- Participant consent form**

### **Title of research project:**

Press Freedom in Zambia: *The Post* and professional practice in political context.

### **Brief description of research project:**

The study investigates the notion of press freedom within political context of an emerging democracy by looking at *The Post* with the aim of highlighting both the challenges and identifying solutions for the maturity of democracy.

### **Investigator contact details:**

Brian Chama  
Department of Media, Culture and Language  
Roehampton University  
London  
United Kingdom  
SW15 5PU

### **Consent statement:**

I agree to participate in this research study and I am aware that this participation is entirely voluntary and I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I understand that all the information I will provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of findings. I also understand that the information I will provide will be kept securely for a period not exceeding ten years after the date of publication.

Name .....  
Position .....  
Signature .....  
Date .....

Please note and tick if you are happy to be identified in this research and any other future academic publications related to this study ☐

If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department or Director of Studies;

### **Director of Studies contact details:      Head of Department contact details:**

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## **Appendix: B- In depth interviews questionnaire**

### **Title of research project:**

Press Freedom in Zambia: *The Post* and professional practice in political context.

### **Brief description of research project:**

The study investigates the notion of press freedom within political context of an emerging democracy by looking at *The Post* with the aim of highlighting both the challenges and identifying solutions for the maturity of democracy.

### **Questions guide**

1. How do you see your main role as a journalist within the wider notion of press freedom?
2. What are moments in your career you felt tabloid journalism was a valuable profession?
3. Do you ever feel constrained by the current legal and political framework as a journalist?
4. Do you ever feel frustrated or liberated by the environment you work under?
5. What are some of the professional challenges that you often encounter as a journalist?
6. What are stories you consider best practice in journalism?
7. Do you have any examples where regulation of the press works well?
8. Do you have aspirations for the press that can contribute to the maturity of democracy?

**Thanks**



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